

The Witness

Volume 79 • Number 11 • November 1996



*Acting in faith:
Responses to the Right*

In need of a labor movement

THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE and Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann's "Anatomy of a strike" especially, deserve praise and wide exposure in the labor movement.

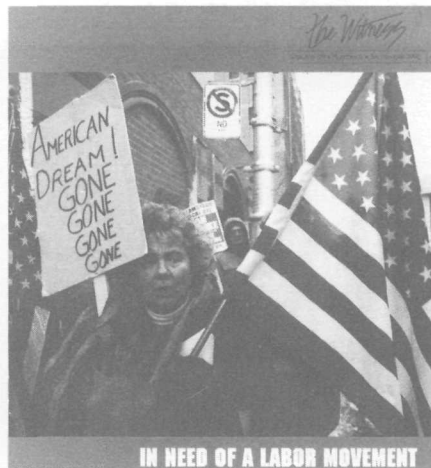
You didn't avoid labor's own shortcomings — an excellent balance from my perspective. I'm a union member and "been there and done that" when it comes to contracts, labor/management disputes, etc.

My bi-vocational role puts me as a pastor in the church and a supervisor in the workplace. With typical Anglican/Episcopal background and skills I find myself trying to keep a working middle ground between labor and management. A great issue. I'm passing it on to the union steward here at work.

Ed King
Channel 50
Detroit, MI

A BACKGROUND COMMENT on "A history of religion and labor" — it was the Christian Church in England who first fought for the rights of workers, against child labor, etc. in the 19th century and who eventually formed the Labor Party. If I remember correctly, it was Methodists who followed up on the Wesleys' concern for the lower classes (so overlooked by the 18th century bishops and clergy in the Anglican church), and also many Anglo-Catholic priests who worked in such places as London's East End, and both men and women in the new monastic communities, as well as certain very social justice minded evangelicals in the C. of E., who struggled for the dignity and rights of the industrial workers. The labor movement grew out of a theology based on Old Testament prophetic calls to social justice, and on Jesus' extremely clear statement that if you did it to the least, you did it to him.

Chapter two of my personal soap opera is that I was laid off from my part-time receptionist job January 1. The tiny firm I worked



for was bought by a large company and the little local office was to be reorganized with only licensed agents. Then began the saga of trying to get my SSI upgraded in accordance with my economic status, my rent likewise, and my food stamps. I'm able to live and pay all my ordinary bills, but I go into debt (and panic) when my 15 year old car has to have work! My elderly teeth need more attention than I can afford to give them. I finally paid for new glasses. The three things that the elderly most need — sight, hearing and teeth — are not covered by Medicaid.

I'm now working as an office volunteer for a local housing coalition, partly doing intake telephone interviews with people who may have no plumbing, no electricity, or whose houses are barely more than shacks. The housing coalition is in financial difficulty, I don't know if it will last. I know some of the wealthy of the county (they go to my church!) and they could save the coalition. Thus far, I see no indication that they will.

Name withheld
Former church secretary cited in 9/96

YOUR EDITORIAL, "TRAMPLING THE grapes of wrath" [9/96], began with a reference to a woman laid off by two Episcopal churches. Yet in calling for the churches to educate themselves about the labor movement, you did not pick up on the point and exhort us to start with a long, hard look at our own employment practices.

As actors in the economy, the churches

give a witness to their true values. Those two churches may have had no choice but to let that woman go. But all too often, our economic decisions are at odds with the gospel. I have written elsewhere that the best union-busters I ever met were a group of nuns who owned a hospital. Furthermore, the prevailing business philosophies always seem to drive the managerial logic of the churches. For instance, the reform of the Episcopal Church structure in 1919 mirrored the thinking of what were then new-style corporations like U.S. Steel. Or again, it is no coincidence that last year's record number of terminations of clergy (1995) occurred in the high point of the downsizing craze.

Union and church leaders often focus more on their income (dues structures/pledge unit) than the real needs of their members (rank and file/parishioners).

We have a great deal of work to do if we are to build a labor-church bridge. First, we might start asking whatever happened to the economic justice initiative known as the Michigan Plan. The speed with which the Episcopal Church dropped it is indicative of how much learning we have to do. Or maybe the operative word should be not learning, but repentance.

Pierre Whalon
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church & School
Fort Pierce, FL

AS A MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT and trainer, and as an Episcopal priest, I read your issue "In Need of a Labor Movement" from cover to cover. I'm provoked, which is good.

I'm still searching for what kind of a labor movement is needed for whom and the issue left that question wide open. Corporate and labor leaders both are stuck in an old adversarial paradigm which is not only outdated, but also destructive to worker and manager alike.

What the issue did not address is how the nature of work itself is changing, as well as what people expect from work. Labor leaders can't seem to deal with the fact that, whatever the color of the collar (blue, pink, white) workers want their work to mean something. No labor union can make that meaning. What union leaders seek often is irrelevant to what workers today want, so workers don't find

Letters

Classifieds

Prisoners need stamps

California prison chaplain needs postage stamps to distribute to indigent inmates for use on Christmas cards. Send donations to Christian Williams, FSP-D18367, Represa, CA 95671-5071.

Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

Classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Payments must accompany submissions. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication.

I LIKED YOUR "RANT ON FATHER-CREEP" and I completely approve. Retired, I worship at St. Aidan where the vicar is a woman. She uses the term "pastor."

Howard Kunkle
Tulsa, OK

THANK YOU FOR PUBLISHING the article by Anne E. Cox.bapt. A few years ago, I was chaplain at our Diocesan All-Ages/Family Camp. For our week-long conference, we chose the theme of "Sisters and Brothers" and we tried to incorporate this theme into all of our studying, singing, playing, praying and worshipping.

One challenge I put before the camp early in the conference was to see if everyone could go for the entire week without calling me "Father." Instead, I encouraged people to call me — and all other males in the camp — "Brother." The same with "Sister."

John C. Morris
Wilmington, VT

unions to be of much help in their aspirations, especially when even industrial work is based much more on brain than brawn. Here in Peoria, during a bitter strike at Caterpillar, more than 60 percent of the union workers either crossed picket lines or simply ignored the strike because the union's priorities did not match their own (but they certainly didn't love the company either).

Corporations can't seem to deal with this change, either. In downsizing, workers are treated as so many depreciating assets that can be expended, rather than as a massive talent pool to be developed. As front-line workers carry management responsibility in team settings, the line between management and labor is blurred. Workers are frustrated when companies and unions both view them as pawns in a larger struggle which has no bearing on how they live their lives and do their work.

John R. Throop
President, The Summit Group
Peoria, IL

I WANT TO RAISE ONE QUESTION about the historicity of your history article. When the Farm Worker Movement Programs were expanded in 1926 with the newly created National Migrant Ministry, the Federal Council of Churches was in existence (founded in 1908), but not the National Council, which was founded in November of 1950 in Cleveland, Oh. "Chris" Hartmire, Union Seminary '60, left the East Harlem Protestant Parish (NYC) to direct that Migrant Ministry program in California in 1961.

Robert I. Miller
Duarte, CA

THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE IS SUPERB.

John G. Rodwan, Jr.
Detroit, MI

"Father-creep"

ANNE COX'S PIECE ON FATHER-CREEP is a treasure.

I am a Virginia Seminary high-churchman and enjoyed being called "Father" in the early

days of my ministry. Then I stopped liking it, mainly, I think because I caught hold of my own personal authority and no longer needed to be acknowledged as an authority by church people or others. I still genuflect now and then and make the sign of the cross, but now I prefer to call priests "brother" and "sister," perfectly wonderful and totally non-hierarchical, egalitarian titles. My own rector, who is called "Father," is beginning to like it as well.

Eugene Monick
Dalton, PA

WHILE I NORMALLY FIND *The Witness* engaging, thought-provoking, and insightful, I must admit that I found the article "A Rant on 'Father-Creep,'" both offensive and condescending. It is all too clear what the Rev. Ms. Cox. bapt. thinks of those who are less than "pure protestants" like herself. In the past, the Episcopal Church has been able to tolerate diversity in the ways in which clergy are addressed without labelling one or the other tradition as a "disease."

There are, of course, arguments that could be made in defense of the use of the titles "Father" or "Mother" that rely on scripture, tradition and pastoral considerations. Paul, for example, is not afraid to remind the Corinthians that he is their father in Christ (1 Cor. 4: 14-15). Note also that Paul elsewhere describes himself as "giving birth" to a church he has founded (Gal. 4: 19-20.). In addition, in John's version of the crucifixion, Jesus himself commands the beloved disciple to take Mary as "his mother." In terms of pastoral considerations, there have been times in my life when I WANTED to speak to someone who was "older, wiser and more mature in the faith" than I. In addition, the prohibition of these titles is no adequate defense against the misuse of power. There are as many demagogues that call themselves "Reverend," or even insist on first names only, as there are who call themselves "Father." For some people, myself included, the use of "Mother" or "Father" is a meaningful and helpful part of their tradition.

Gerard F. Beritela
Syracuse, NY

The Witness

Volume 79 • Number 11 • November 1996

Editor/publisher	Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann
Managing Editor	Julie A. Wortman
Assistant Editor	Marianne Arbogast
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Book Review Editor	Bill Wylie-Kellermann
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There's a difference
 between being baptized
 and brainwashed.



Cover: Bird Ascending by Michael McCurdy, Great Barrington, MA.

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Poetry can be sent directly to Leslie Williams, 2504 Gulf Ave., Midland, TX. 79705.

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An imperative not to despair

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

The recent political successes of the Religious Right have been frightening to many of us.

My sister-in-law shocked us a few years ago when she told us that the Christian Right had stealthily taken over her local school board and that already some teachers had been told they couldn't read Halloween stories that included the word "witch." We breathed a sigh of relief when she added that several members of her Presbyterian congregation, intending to counter the Right's influence, had volunteered to serve on a school board values committee and, by the luck of the draw, were even chairing it.

Daniel Cantor, director of the New Party, says it is small surprise that the Right is quite successful. Members of the Left feel generous if they send a \$25 check to an environmental or political action group. Meanwhile, he adds, some Christian Coalition chapters require a \$30-a-month commitment.

As the Christian Right wins elections, gains credibility in the Republican Party, packs stadiums with Promise Keepers and teaches Americans to tithe for perhaps the first time, it's easy to feel inadequate.

Many of us feel tongue-tied even identifying ourselves. Are we Left? Are we known as Christians or do our liberal values prevent us from claiming Jesus as Lord in public? And, if we're not committing enough, why do we already feel so tired all the time?

I found it reassuring to learn that Diane Knippers, director of the Right-wing Institute for Religion and Democracy (IRD), believes the IRD's work began because

"our founders were concerned about church support for Marxist-Leninist groups and movements." Read: church support for the Sanctuary Movement which brought Central American refugees into this country, for the peace process in El Salvador, and for an end to U.S. interference in Nicaragua after the Sandinista revolution.

Interestingly, Knippers added that liberation theology no longer seems to be "the prevailing trendy theology of the leadership of the mainline churches." Now, she says, "various forms of feminist theology are cutting-edge."

We forget, I think, our real victories. And sometimes we minimize the beliefs that create them. The media, of course, is eager to help us forget by refusing to publish or air our efforts.

But we have accomplished a great deal and we come out of a tradition that we can claim and rely on.

In deciding what to do next, *The Witness* staff would urge each of us to weigh our own health and energy — to make sure that we are rooted — and then to act in a way that is consistent with our hearts. Our actions may range from civil disobedience to running for school board to praying in a consistent way. We are persuaded that there is no correct answer. We are also convinced that it will be the Holy Spirit that leads us — in different bioregions and in different time frames — to act.

We can discern with one another when our desire for roots is interfering with our willingness to act. We can offer one another respect in the process.

If there is any imperative, it is simply not to despair. It is our vocation to praise God in this time and for eternity. Our

voices are joined by a choir of others.

The elders I trust most are the ones whose eyes express great love and humor and a certain detachment combined with a provocative query — what will *you* do? They do not give permission for laziness, but they seem to hold a confidence grounded in the greatest secret — perhaps that we are all loved by God.

This issue examines some of the many, and sometimes contradictory, ways we can respond to narrow-minded and rigid overtures from the Christian Right. It also relies on the knowledge that the far Right is not the source of our main problems. They are simply the agitating voice that often supports the deep and subtle force of economic and military powers that advocate profit over human life and power over compassion. Joe Agne suggests that the Right is to the center as the Gestapo was to the Third Reich.

We do well to keep our hand on the pulse of the banks, the corporate powers, the agricultural conglomerates and the development fiends. If Nazi Germany is a prototype example, some of those among conservative Christian evangelicals may help sustain our courage in resisting the powers. They may do it, as they did in Germany, by declaring Christ as Lord or, as they did in South Africa, by proclaiming that we are one in Christ.

Somehow we must recognize the word in hearts and on our lips. We must find a way to witness and to take root for the long haul. We can offer our commitment, our time and money, our hearts and minds to the claims that the Gospel makes on us in this time when it feels to us as though wolves in sheep's clothing abound. **TW**

editor's note

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

‘God don’t want you to smoke’

by Kendal Franceschi

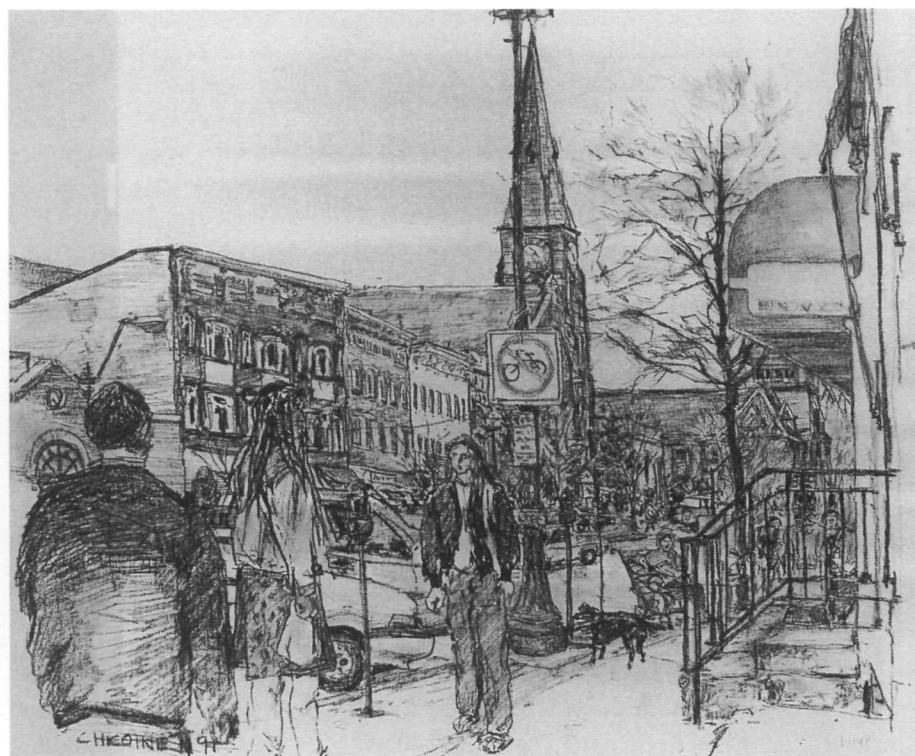
way that day was rather on the chubby side. I bet God wouldn’t want him to be an overweight, artery-clogging, cholesterol-sucking, heart attack-baiting, Dr.

I was driving down the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway on my way home from work one day and I had these “Honk If You Love Jesus” type bumper stickers plastered all over the rear of my car (I was really into being a “Jesus Person” — it was the 1970s). I was just cruising along the highway with my window open, happily puffing away on a Camel, when I heard someone tooting his horn behind me. I thought, “Now ain’t that nice, a brother in Christ is signaling his Christian love. We’re truly one big family.” I turned in my seat to wave a friendly hand of brotherhood to this fellow sojourner. As he drove up beside me I flashed him my most joyous ain’t-Jesus-cool smile. The man looked at me like I was Jack the Ripper or something, shook his finger and yelled out his window, “God don’t want you to smoke!”

God don’t want me to smoke? That was his greeting? “God don’t want you to smoke?” I thought I was saved. I thought we were fellow pilgrims on this earthly road to Heaven. How about a “Hello, brother,” or a “Praise the Lord!” Even a simple “How ya’ doin’,” would have been okay, but this mysterious message from a total stranger was so totally unexpected, I was speechless.

My newfound spiritual joy was shattered, my bubble burst. The first thing this person saw when he saw me was what I shouldn’t be doing. Wasn’t that dumb? I knew right then and there that

Kendal Franceschi is a songwriter in Hendersonville, Tenn., who writes articles about Christianity, music and horses. Franceschi says he is Episcopalian — “or as I call it, Catholic-Lite, 98 percent guilt-free.” Artist **Wendy Chicoine** lives in Northampton, Mass.



Wendy Chicoine

being “saved” may give you a new soul, but judging by this guy’s remark, apparently it don’t give you a new brain. If you’re a lost moron, chances are you’re gonna be a saved moron.

That was his greeting?

“God don’t want you to smoke?” I thought I was saved. I thought we were fellow pilgrims on this earthly road to Heaven.

Does God want me to smoke? Probably not. It’s unhealthy. His “messenger” there on the Brooklyn-Queens Express-

Pepper-slugging chowhound, eating large, double cheese, pepperoni pizzas, with his only form of physical exertion limited to reaching for the Gummi-Bears while he’s jacked up on the couch watching endless reruns of “Leave It To Beaver” either. It’s unhealthy.

On any Sunday morning, after church, you can see a good many church-folk at the local Shoney’s breakfast bar scarfing down scrambled eggs and sausages with side orders of bacon and grease-laden Home-Fries like there’s no tomorrow. I’ll bet God don’t want them to do that.

Until all of us Christians are doing absolutely nothing that “God don’t want us to do” I think it would be a novel idea to get on with doing what He *does* want us to do.

TW

When the Rooms

by Johannes Bobrowski

When the rooms are deserted
in which answers are given, when
the walls and narrow passes fall, shadows
fly out of the trees, when the grass
beneath the feet is abandoned
while soles tread the wind —

the bush of thorn flames,
I hear its voice,

where no question was, the waters
move, but I do not thirst.

— *translated from the German by Ruth and Matthew Mead. From East German Poetry, ed. by Michael Hamburger, E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., N.Y., 1973.*



“On the edge of cultural change”

by Julie A. Wortman

There has been an upsurge of “cultural creatives” in this country during the last ten years, according to a 1995 survey on American values. Paul H. Ray of the San Francisco research firm American Lives, estimates that this group includes 44 million Americans, people who are “operating on the leading edge of cultural change.”

Cultural creatives value different cultures, strong neighborhoods/communities and family. They want to stop violence and abuse of women and children and work for ecological sustainability. They distrust the power, wealth and profit-orientation of big corporations. Not confined to any one part of the country and slightly better educated than most other Americans (30 percent are college graduates), cultural creatives, Ray says, desire spiritual lives of voluntary simplicity, self discovery and service.

Putting these people in touch with one another could lead to a movement that would revitalize society, Ray believes. “It would be similar to a values-based social movement in its appeal to deeply held values,” he says, “but it differs strongly in that it seeks to move off into the new, rather than to return to an idealized past, or to restore old ethnic and religious ‘purities.’”

A role for churches?

Could Christian churches be instrumental in developing such a movement? Not as long as the face of Christianity most familiar to Americans is that worn by the leaders of the Christian Right whose proud proclamation that “Jesus is Lord” seems

to be code for a check-your-mind-at-the-door sort of religious/social agenda that squelches rather than encourages the free exchange of ideas.

That was the consensus, at least, at a gathering of about 100 self-proclaimed “progressive Christians” held at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Columbia, S.C., last summer. Sponsored by the fledgling Center for Progressive Christianity (CPC), a group founded by James R. Adams, recently retired rector of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., the Columbia forum sought to claim “a vision of progressive Christianity” that would, in Adams’ words, “take back our symbols” and “redefine what it means to be a follower of Jesus in terms of each being a person for others. We are looking for trouble-makers, people who want to be in on the beginning of a movement.”

Cultural creatives, Paul H. Ray says, desire spiritual lives of voluntary simplicity, self discovery and service.

Across the country a variety of groups are making similar attempts (see sidebar on p. 11). At this assembly, participants seemed intent on proving that the Minnesota-based Church Ad Project has been right all these years — there is a place in the church for people who believe “there’s a difference between being baptized and brainwashed,” and that “in a religion that was born in a barn, an open door goes without saying.”

Offering rootedness and ‘welcome’

The key thing the church can offer such folks, philosophy professor Robert Kane

told one workshop group, is a sense of “rootedness” in a world in which people find themselves feeling that “not only are there many views, but I can’t show mine is right and theirs is wrong.” People feel this way, he said, because “the pluralism and uncertainty [of the modern world] break apart our spiritual center.” To heal the breach, “we need to find our roots, to go back to our tradition.”

While Christian conservatives also are going back to their roots, Kane said, their inclination is to declare the traditional teachings of the past to be today’s “Truth.” But such an approach often ignores modern realities. Christians can begin with their religious roots and, embracing the modern notion of openness, proceed with the conviction that “I don’t have the whole truth, but I have something indispensable to the whole.”

The church can also offer spiritual seekers something researcher Ray says cultural creatives value very highly — community. To that end, in addition to offering workshops on the distinctive attributes of communities that display an openness to “all sorts and conditions of people” (a sizeable contingent from Adam’s former Capitol Hill congregation testified to their own successes in this department) the forum’s CPC organizers announced a plan to publish a directory of Christian congregations that self-identify as progressive in an effort to provide people who have moved to a new community or who are visiting a strange city with a list of “welcoming” churches.

Where’s the blood?

But there was also an undertone of restlessness among some of the Columbia forum’s participants as individual after individual expressed a strong desire to “move beyond” Left and Right categories to find some “common ground” with religious conservatives. (“I’m not interested in an adversarial stance,” said Erin Saberi, a graduate student at Yale Divin-

Julie A. Wortman is managing editor of *The Witness*. For a Church Ad Project catalog, call 800-331-9391.

ity School who explained she wanted “to heal” the culture war divide. “I’m looking for transformation.”)

“I’m sensing timidity in the group around sexuality issues facing us right now,” observed feminist theologian Carter Heyward in one what-have-you-heard-so-far plenary check-in session. “We need to have something to say about the movement against gay men and lesbians in this church and country today.”

Heyward’s colleague at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Fredericka Thompson, concurred. “I’m not looking for community,” she said. “I’ve got one. I am looking for coalition to counter Religious Right politics.”

A participant from Georgia also pushed a workshop group on racism. “As progressive Christians,” she said, “we have to deal with white supremacy.”

“My movement, as a person who came of age in the 1970s, has been out of ambiguity into something I can hold onto,” said Michael Burke, a newly ordained priest from Rochester, N.Y. “I want clarity, tangibility, particularity. I have to have more of a sense of what is at stake here. I respect the Right for its passion and sense that progress is not inevitable. I think of a lyric from Bruce Coburn — *When everything is ambiguity except the taste of blood*. My fear is to go away feeling there isn’t anything to feel passionate about.”

A call for costly action

An attempt to dispel that fear came at the end of the Columbia meeting when, during a report-back from small groups, Ellen K. Wondra, an associate professor at the Rochester Center for Theological Studies, presented a request from “Group 10” that CPC commit itself to “working concretely, actively and in a costly manner” over the next three years against the evils of racism and homophobia. She explained that “evils manifest in multiple ways, including the apparent indifference and/

or silence of self-styled moderates, liberals and progressives.” The CPC forum organizers said they would take the request under consideration.

Douglas LeBlanc, who writes for Episcopalians United, a conservative group, chose to discount CPC’s importance through a not-so-subtle put-down. Play-

There’s a difference between being baptized and brainwashed.



Church Ad Project

Predictably, a brief July press report in the Right-leaning Episcopal Church weekly, *The Living Church*, focussed on Group 10’s acknowledgment that, among other things, “civil disobedience and ecclesiastical disobedience of various sorts” could be involved. “Disobedience is a sure way to fracture further this portion of the body of Christ,” a September editorial subsequently chided, while praising a passive-aggressive proposal by Philip Turner, dean of Berkeley Divinity School at Yale, that the next presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church “ought to call for a moratorium on all resolutions and canons having to do with disputed theological and moral issues for the entire time he or she is in office.”

But in his lengthy report on the forum,

ing on an opening remark by CPC’s Adams that, “Here we are, a group of 90 people gathered to talk about transforming an institution [the Church] with a 1,900-year history of oppression and exclusion,” LeBlanc concluded his story on the Columbia gathering thus: “They sang the hymn ‘Dear Lord and Father of Mankind,’ after some on-the-spot group editing changed the opening line to ‘Dear Lord and Creator of Us All.’ Then they went home, saving their scrappy reformation of the 1,900-year-old oppressor for another day.”

Ant-and-spider resistance

Whether the future will validate LeBlanc’s prediction that, just as Group 10 feared, this loose array of “self-styled moderates, liberals and progressives” won’t find

A view from the Right

When the Center for Progressive Christianity sponsored its first national conference, participants were deeply divided about the limits of dialogue.

Andrew Getman pressed for dialogue even with members of the Ku Klux Klan. Norene Carter responded that she would talk with anyone, but that members of the KKK are better known for violence than for intellectual discourse. I smiled in quiet agreement with Carter's point.

But I also know that some progressives feel the same caution about me and my friends. Is dialogue any more plausible between the traditionalist and progressive Episcopalians? My answer is a vigorous yes, with only one qualification: The dialogue should begin with individuals, not committees.

I know and love friends in Integrity, the Episcopal Women's Caucus, the Standing Liturgical Commission, the Association of Diocesan Liturgical and Music Commissions and the Episcopal Church Center.

I am skeptical of dialogue by decree — the idea that General Convention can, through enough resolutions and funding, make dialogue break out like so much peace. Dialogue by decree often leads to laundry lists of "talking norms," prohibitions on appeals to Scripture and the smiling control of sensitivity consultants.

The only worthwhile dialogues I've ever known are based on glorious trust, the ability to say whatever is on my mind — and granting the same freedom to the other — without fear of rebuke by a speech sheriff. Serious

Christians normally will show such courtesy, knowing that other people are fellow creatures made in the image of God. We don't need a consultant to enforce that respect.

Dialogue by decree has been a largely tedious and exhausting exercise because it reverses the model given us by Jesus Christ for resolving conflict within the church (see Matthew 18:15ff). Dialogue by decree involves the entire church in what is most appropriately an individual discussion.

True dialogue can only emerge as individuals freely but graciously describe their deepest convictions. Any effort at lowest-common-denominator agreement, or a relativistic insistence that truth is as subjective as taste in music, cuts off real dialogue and declares peace when there is no peace.

I believe real dialogue leads to these goals:

- Greater understanding of one another. Whether a person agrees with me or "respects my opinion" is less important than whether we can describe what the other believes, and why.

- Greater clarity about what divides us. Our discussions about sexuality and marriage are important, and we dodge those at our peril. Nevertheless, we also need to face our real differences about the nature of God, our understanding of sin and redemption and our conflicting visions of eternal life.

I would love to conduct a straw poll of Episcopalians, asking a simple, non-directive question: What is the heart of the Gospel? I've heard many Episcopalians describe the Gospel as "the all-inclusive love of God." Most evangelical Episco-

palians would answer with "the cross and the empty tomb of Jesus Christ." Such significant disagreement cries for more discussion.

- Greater clarity about how we might achieve spiritual unity. Timothy Sedgwick of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary has observed that the painful debate about sexual morality and marriage not only will, but must, someday reach a conclusion. What some Episcopalians have called "discontinuities" between teaching and practice will tear at the fabric of our church until General Convention makes real decisions with real consequences.

No matter what Convention decides, some Episcopalians will rejoice and some will mourn. To his credit, Sedgwick already urges that those who rejoice show grace to those who mourn. Some will make their peace with Convention's decisions. Others may feel compelled to find a Christian community where they feel less spiritual dissonance.

I worry about how quick some Episcopalians may be to shoot their own wounded. I have seen traditionalists treat converts to Roman Catholicism as if they have left the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, rather than moving to another expression of it. I have seen self-described inclusive Christians trash evangelicals as "Pharisaical" or "fundamentalist" if they dare stand for truth. Traditionalists have done their own motives-bashing and name-calling, and I find that just as disturbing.

We can all do better than this — not only as Episcopalians, but above all as people who recognize the lordship of Jesus Christ.

— Doug LeBlanc *edits* United Voice for Episcopalians United.

sufficient common will to create change in the church is anyone's guess. It would be a mistake to be monitoring stadium-size religious gatherings, however, for signs that he is wrong. In the mode favored by the cultural creatives that researcher Ray describes, CPC seems more likely to align itself with the "ant-and-spider" path of resistance described by Korean feminist liberation theologian, Chung Hyung Kyung in a lecture she delivered at Detroit's Wayne State University last winter. Ants, Chung said, bring change by loosening the soil as they dig away in many places at once, while spiders are adept at creating intricate but

loose webs of connection.

This seems to be borne out by CPC's board of advisors' recent decision to continue focussing on cultivating and linking Christian congregations that want to build community across difference, to be open to free enquiry, to strive for social justice and, in acknowledgment of last summer's "Group 10" request, to commit to a faith "that entails costly discipleship, renunciation of privilege and conscientious resistance to evil."

Also on the agenda is the coalition-making and denominational-level "acting out" Heyward, Thompsett, Burke and others called for in Columbia. CPC is

planning another forum for May 1-3 in Houston at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. In the meantime, similar conversations in other groups are exploring these same concerns in a spirit of freedom and care that Ray says is typical of cultural creatives.

The tension between prizing questions over answers and coming to some common mind about where to stand firm in the face of oppressive politics will likely continue to play itself out at this second effort to test the waters for signs of the church's ability to attract today's growing crop of cultural creatives into the Christian fold. **TW**

Christians witnessing to an alternative

The following local and national groups are some among many working to build an alternative to the Religious Right:

Alabama Christian Faith Alliance: "We support the diverse ways by which Christians deal with public issues. No person or group within the Christian community possesses the only 'Christian' response to matters of public concern." 1430 Thirteenth Place South #2. Birmingham, AL 35205.

Call to Action: An independent and member-supported organization of Catholic lay people, religious and clergy working together to foster peace, justice and love in the spirit of Vatican II and the U.S. Bishop's 1976 Call to Action. 4419 N. Kedzie, Chicago, IL 60625, 312-604-0400.

Call to Renewal: "Our commitment is to diligently apply spiritual values to the questions of our public life and to offer a Christian alternative to ideological religion." Led by Jim Wallis of *Sojourners* magazine. 2401 15th St.

NW, Wash., D.C. 20009; 202-328-8757.

Evangelical & Ecumenical Women's Caucus: National network of Christian feminists who take Scripture seriously yet struggle with "traditionalist" views. Reta Finger, Virginia Ramey Mollenkott and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen [TW 10/96] are all members. Box 9989, Oakland, CA 94613-0989. Annual dues include a subscription to *Update* (\$35; \$15 for students or low-income).

Foundation for Ethics and Meaning: Based on Michael Lerner's "Politics of Meaning," the foundation works on organizing local summits, training activists, countering Religious Right campaigns, and serves as a think tank policy institute. 251 West 100th St., New York, NY 10025, 510-528-4974.

Inclusion Task Force, All Saints Episcopal Church, Pasadena, Cal.: "Beyond Inclusion: Celebrating Gay and Lesbian Commitments and Ministries" conference planned for April 11-13, 1997. Speakers including Andrew Sullivan, Marilyn

McCord Adams, Michael Battle, L. William Countryman, Patricia Beattie Jung, and Juan Oliver will address the history, theology and practice of gay and lesbian participation in the Episcopal Church. "Join with action-minded people to share ideas and support as we journey toward the July 1997 General Convention." 132 North Euclid Ave., Pasadena, CA 91101, 818-583-2752.

The Interfaith Alliance: National network seeks "to mobilize the religious community to become more involved in the political process, to promote the positive role of religion in American public life, and to provide an alternative voice to that of religious-political extremists." Suite 738, 1511 K Street, NW, Wash., D.C. 20005. www.intr.net/tialliance, 202-639-6370.

We Are Family Foundation: "Our vision is to experience a world where we are integrated and whole, individually and societally, and where diversity of all kinds is valued and celebrated." Acceptance of gays and lesbians as full members of society is a key goal. Charleston, S.C. 29417, 803-856-0577.

Divided vision?: a conversation with Jim Wallis & Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

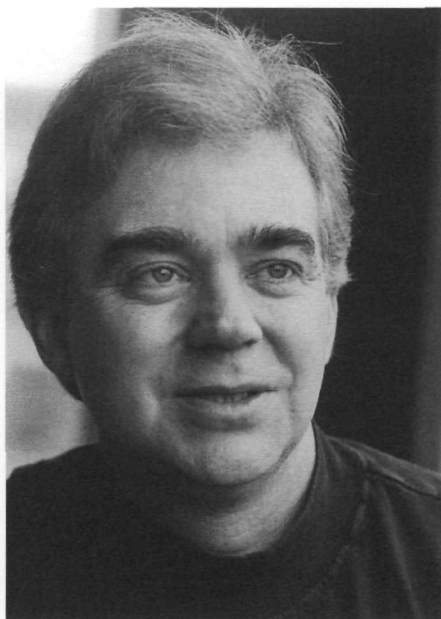
For decades *The Witness* and *Sojourners* have tread similar ground. Staff at both magazines discern evil in many of the same institutional abuses of power. Articles in both magazines examine Scripture in an effort to see how Christians might witness against the powers of death.

While there have always been differences in style and in some particulars, *The Witness* and *Sojourners* recently defined themselves in opposite ways.

Sojourners is launching Call to Renewal, a movement that attempts to break the grip of polarities by creating a new paradigm in which the labels "Left" and "Right" fall away as people coalesce around issues of import that cut across the old boundaries. The editors of the conservative journal *First Things* have condescendingly referred to this approach as "beyondist."

At the same moment, *The Witness* staff decided to advertise *The Witness* as a Left publication, believing that — in the maelstrom of media images and capitalist claims of worldwide victory — we hold fast best by reminding ourselves of our heritage in the Left.

A conversation between Jim Wallis and Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann seemed in order.



Jim Wallis

The Witness: *The Witness* staff, after a recent period of discernment, concluded that it would advertise itself as a Left journal. At the same time, *Sojourners* has decided that it is beyond Left and Right. What's at issue here?

Jim Wallis: Left and Right are old categories. I don't think they work on the ground in the lives of ordinary people. I work with a lot of young people who are leaving gangs. They are trying to end the

violence in their communities. At gang summits they are asking, how do we transform our lives, our neighborhoods, our politics, and ultimately our nation?

I hear young gang leaders, women and men, talking about the need to take personal responsibility, the need to be good parents to the kids they've brought into the world, to rebuild family systems, to make different moral choices. Those are the kind of things you often hear conservatives talking about. And I've been in gangs summits where it almost sounded like a Young Republican self-help convention. Then they talk about racism and how a changing global economy has ripped 70,000 jobs out of south-central Los Angeles. They talk about the need for community-based economic development. They talk about police brutality and then they sound like radical neighborhood organizers.

They're talking about transformation. They don't care a whit about traditional Left and Right. They want something that will work.

We need a new configuration of partners. We need a new social policy para-

I hear young gang leaders talking about the need to take personal responsibility, the need to be good parents, to make different moral choices, and about police brutality. They don't care a whit about traditional Left and Right.

— Jim Wallis

ing or bureaucratizing the poor. I think the Democrats support systems that control poor people and maintain poverty. Republicans support solutions which

Artist Irene Duffy lives in Pullman, Wash.

would abandon the poor altogether. We have to find some new solutions beyond liberal and conservative, Left and Right. **Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann:** I believe as the Christian Right goes on the warpath, there's a value in holding ground with the Left. We need to hang onto and raise up the traditions of the women's rights movement, the anti-war movement, the civil rights and labor movements. There is a real value in the socialist critique of capitalism.

I share Jim's view that the Left has often ignored issues of personal responsibility, but I want to acknowledge that my politics have been largely shaped on the Left.

The Witness magazine has been around since 1917. The editor who held the position longest was Bill Spofford, a socialist who took a lot of risks in the labor movement and covered it regularly. Like *Sojourners* in so many ways, *The Witness* has taken risks for women's rights and for Puerto Rican revolutionaries. It has put forward the views of people like Angela Davis, the Black Panthers, the American Indian movement and gay and lesbian Christians.

The Witness has tried hard to present the views of people who aren't going to make it on NBC or CBS. Its orientation and its roots are Left. That's the commitment that it holds. It's also true that it is really committed to speaking respectfully with people from traditions that don't share the values of the magazine and we welcome critiques from other communities. We don't believe that we have the whole truth.

I'm not sure there is any one program that's an answer. Instead, I look to the groups that rise up as a consequence of some local injustice and then connect with one another, wellsprings that have the potential organically to work for non-violence, sustainable economics, cross-cultural respect.

Often the allies that I find in this process are on the Left. I look to groups like ACORN, labor unions, women religious and folks practicing liberation theology, all of whom are people who traditionally



Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

have been identified as allies in both *The Witness* and *Sojourners*.

Jim, I know you share a lot of these commitments. Is it really fair to say that you're beyond Left and Right if you do draw on a socialist critique of capitalism?

J.W.: My critique of capitalism is still very strong, but I also have a critique of top-down command economies which have been the socialist answer to capitalism, which in my view have failed and failed miserably.

For a while I thought each next revolution might be better. We thought maybe

in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas, since they have more of a Christian tradition than a Marxist-Leninist one, might do well. But the Contra war was not the only reason that the Sandinistas failed. They failed miserably internally. They turned over their security apparatus to East European security forces. They abused the Miskito Indians. They violated human rights.

The Left can't say on the one hand that concentrated economic power, corporate capitalism, is abusive and then say concentrating political power in the hands of self-appointed elites is a solution to that. And the Right can't say, we're against big government because it becomes abusive, but then say nothing about concentrated economic power. Let's go beyond both capitalist economy and command economy.

J.W.-K.: Most folks on the Left gave up their belief in centralized power decades ago. Certainly when the Communist Party decided to stand behind Stalin and then discovered his atrocities there were huge splits in Left communities. A lot of folks realized that centralized power was problematic. At the same time, they continued

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and labor movements.*

— Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

to offer a critique that exposes capitalism's drive to amass more wealth at the expense of workers.

J.W.: I find an awful lot of people on the Left have been supportive of large scale concentrations of political power. I've had arguments with people who said, "We're against nuclear

power, but not when it's in the hands of socialist governments."

In the 1980s, I was in the heart of the

anti-Contra War movement and we fought on a regular basis with Central American solidarity groups who refused to publicly acknowledge the mistakes of the Sandinistas. They would attack me, *Sojourners*, and Penny Lernoux for critiquing the Sandinistas. They said we gave aid and ammunition to the Reagan administration to fight the Contra War.

J.W.-K.: The critics you cite are not defending centralized power; they are resorting to a dubious strategy of refusing to acknowledge the mistakes on their own side. This is a strategy that cuts across ideology — plenty of people on the Right also refuse to admit the errors and abuses in their struggles. There will always be people who are too arrogant to acknowledge them. There will also always be a lot of people who pretty readily acknowledge the mistakes. I think of the Quakers, whom I would place on the Left, who are self-reflective and capable of reexamining their commitments or styles of leadership.

J.W.: I'm not willing any more to go along with middle- and upper-middle class intellectual liberals from universities taking the leadership of guerilla movements and then ruling in the name of poor people. I don't want those people to win anymore. I want the ordinary people to win.

J.W.-K.: Jim, neither you nor I have ever identified ourselves as liberals. We have considered ourselves radical Christians — people I understood to be making real sacrifices on the Left. This was a third option I learned, in part, from *Sojourners*. Where do you identify yourself now?

J.W.: I'm talking about radical Christianity. Look, it's a new day. The cold war is over, the Berlin Wall has come down. The old ideological combat between the Soviets and the U.S. — that's past.

If we care about radically Christian transformational politics — Gospel rooted vision that puts the poor, community and

women's rights at the center — then I want to get shed of the old Left, socialist tags. Those secular, political solutions fall short of being radically Christian.

Now, my bias — biblically, theologically — is workers over management in every strike situation I've ever heard of. I think what you all are doing in Detroit is extremely creative. But even there, you're creating an independent citizens' voice that is advocating on behalf of the workers, the readers and the community. You're insisting on being able to critique union bureaucracies when they become corrupt.

Socialism is a dead word in this country and I don't have any commitment to resurrect that word. It's baggage that I don't want to carry around with me. — Jim Wallis

J.W.-K.: It doesn't seem alarming or surprising to me that we need to critique the Left. Most movements make huge errors. I guess the value of staying within the Left for me is identity. It's important to me to remember how my ideas evolved and which people were helpful in forming those views.

When we called the first demonstration at the *Free Press* and *The News*, there was something wonderful about the folks who showed up. I hadn't seen some in 10 or 15 years and while I wouldn't align myself with them on all issues, there's still a shared perspective about the way power is exercised in this culture.

For instance, this group shares an intelligent critique of the media and has an immediate grasp on what it means when a few corporations own all the outlets that reflect back to us a corporate idea of who we are. With other friends, I can't count

on that shared understanding. We can break ground on the topic and we might well come to the same conclusions, but it would be a construct that they would have to struggle with.

Also, it can be useful to my adversaries to know that I am on the Left. The identification provides them with a sense of what biases I may bring to the conversation.

J.W.: It's an identity question, a language question and also a tactical question.

I was always more comfortable in the civil rights movement which was black church based and not just the Left. In the secular anti-war student movement at Michigan State, the lack of a spirituality was devastating. So when I met Dan and Phil Berrigan and the religious peace movement, I was relieved. But I think the strongest part of the religious Left is their religion and not their Left.

How you and I approach a lot of questions is very similar. I'm not aware of any substantial or structural disagreement.

But my identity is with spiritually based movements for social change. In my study I've got pictures of the people who are my identity, my family tree — Beyers Naude, Sojourner Truth, Malcolm, Martin and Gandhi. All of them had a spiritual and religious dimension that critiques the Left.

I think socialism is a dead word in this country and I don't have any commitment to resurrect that word. You could be socialist and talk about community economics, but I don't choose to use the word. It's baggage that I don't want to carry around with me.

I think you cut off dialogue. There are people in this country right now who weren't part of the movements that I was part of and yet I've discovered that many of them really do care about poor people. They care about racism. Yet they're from more conservative places in this society.

J.W.-K.: But none of the people you

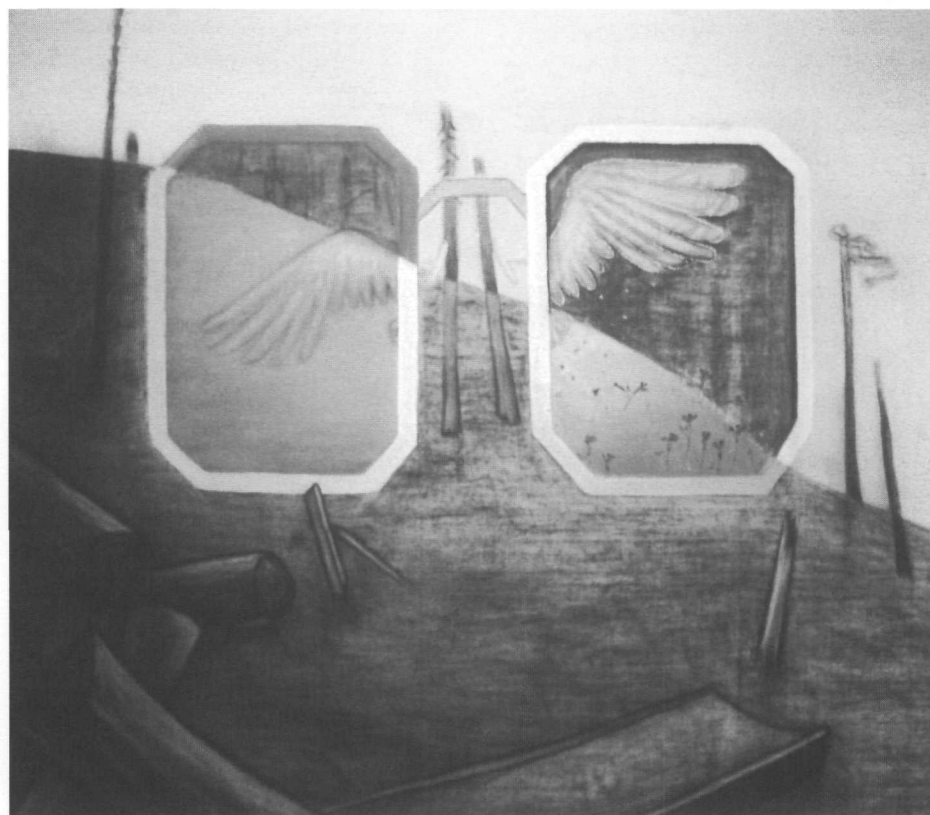
name as allies could be defined as Right-wing. They are the people that Joe McCarthy would have hunted down as communists because of their compassion and interest in justice.

As for socialism being dead, part of what socialism represented was another economic way. The powers are quite content to have our imaginations narrowed to a confidence in capitalism, but keeping socialist vision in the conversation broadens our options.

If I'm looking for information, there are people, organizations and newsletters that I turn to. I could name the folks that I would turn to if I wanted to look at current events in any country, the activities of the CIA or the way that police surveillance works in this country. There's a whole network of folks that I draw on to do analysis and I feel very comfortable relying on them. I talk to people who don't share that point of view, but I rely on the people and organizations with whom I have history.

The Witness: *Sojourners* has supported the Sandinista Revolution, the Sanctuary Movement and blood-pouring actions against militarism. Is it disingenuous to say now that you are forging "an independent Christian vision of faith and political responsibility that's beyond the Right and the Left"?

J.W.: That's what the Right wing says. I was raised in an evangelical church, so I was born and raised in a conservative cultural and political environment. The movements with which I've been associated are poor people's movements, racial justice movements, peace movements, now anti-violence movements among young gang members. That has been defined in my political life on the Left side of the political spectrum. I come from the progressive political world. I don't apologize for that at all. I've never written an article yet that repudiated my opposition to the Vietnam War; I have people who



Limited vision

Irene Duffy

want me to do that. But I can't say to be Christian puts you on the Left.

The Witness: Jeanie, Jim's focus in *Call to Renewal* is on building a movement. Do you feel that your insistence on identifying yourself as Left needlessly limits your audience?

J.W.-K.: Jim said earlier that the three issues in this are identity, semantics and tactics.

There may be a tactical advantage in dumping the language, but I'm not convinced. The national debate is polarized in the media, but I believe that the people of this country are smart enough to understand that they can work with members of other constituencies. Some will even remember positively the populist banks, the Communist soup kitchens during the depression, the Black Panther day care programs and the Sanctuary movement.

Also, I'm not trying to build a large-

scale movement. This is a big difference between Jim and me. Sometimes I wonder if it's a limitation in my imagination, but other times it seems like a biblical understanding of politics. I expect to be struggling against the principalities, often with people I am politically aligned with and sometimes with people whose values are very different. I'm not looking for one over-arching movement. In fact, I'd be anxious that before long, such a movement would show signs of the abuse and deception that Jim was sorry to detect amongst the Sandinistas.

The Witness: Jim, we notice that you recently joined the Christian Coalition's Ralph Reed in signing a statement against abortion which was published in the May '96 issue of *First Things*. For us it raises some of the identity questions. Could you say what led you to sign that statement?

J.W.: I like the Common Ground move-

ment. On the pro-choice side, Naomi Wolf is trying to get the pro-choice movement to take abortion more seriously by saying, "There's a real death here." I also hear pro-life people, even some conservative politicians, saying, "Let's stop talking about criminalization. Let's talk about changing the moral climate. Let's recognize the anguish of women who are in difficult situations. Let's talk about male irresponsibility."

But I do favor the kind of restrictions they have in Pennsylvania, a public policy which doesn't ban abortion, but discourages it. Most of western Europe has that in place. We're the only western democracy that has absolutely no restrictions on abortion.

J.W.-K.: *Witness* readers know that I've had some serious reservations about abortion, particularly when it's used for convenience or in the quest for the perfect baby. But I find this particular statement really troublesome.

It's wrapped in the American flag, misrepresents the support available for pregnant women, seems to include patriarchal assumptions and has a strong bias toward heterosexual, nuclear families.

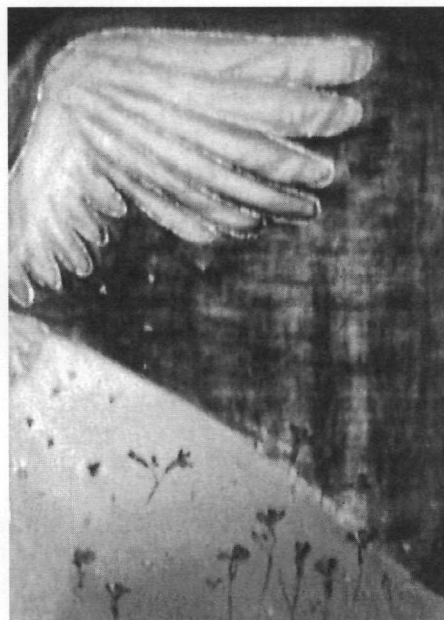
The statement says that because of abortion, democracy is wounded. They make it sound as though abortion became legally available through some undemocratic process rather than admitting that we live in a democracy; abortion became law; they want the law changed.

Jim, I can't imagine that you felt comfortable with the language that they use. They talk about "the bulwarks" of American society being lawyers, academics, teachers, civil servants and doctors.

Is it partly your goal to set down the baggage of the Left and identify yourself across Left-Right lines that would make it seem appropriate to sign this kind of statement?

J.W.: I didn't do this to gain favor with the Right wing or to show I wasn't a

Leftist after all. I signed it personally, not institutionally, because I thought there was enough in it indicating a different direction in the pro-life movement that I wanted to affirm and be in dialogue with those people. I feel part of my calling is to try and help build some common ground



Part of what socialism represented was another economic way. The powers are quite content to have our imaginations narrowed to a confidence in capitalism.

— Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

between people and constituencies that have been divided, but who might begin to move in some similar directions. I want to affirm those directions in different constituencies.

The Witness: Lastly, Jim, please comment on the statement in *Call to Renewal's* literature that says "the wall between public and private solutions must come

down in favor of new partnerships and configurations that involve everyone."

J.W.: The Left has relied too much on the state to solve our problems. And the Right has over-relied on the marketplace. The problems are going to be solved by the civil society—the non-profit sector, family, community, schools, projects in synagogues and churches.

I'm doing retreats these days for some big city mayors and their staff people. All they want to talk about is new politics, new configurations. They know the federal government isn't going to be the answer any more, even if they wanted it to be. So how do you find new solutions at the local level?

J.W.-K.: A lot of the best ideas *are* on the local level and formed in non-profits. But, if public money is being used in organizations that have a religious orientation, how do you protect the interests and rights of people who are not Christian?

J.W.: You prohibit public funds for religious activity, but where religious groups are on the ground doing the work, you don't discriminate against them because they are religious.

Stephen Carter makes it clear that we've gone too far with this. The separation of church and state is meant to keep religion from being intruded upon by the state; it's not to keep religious values and institutions out of the public square.

J.W.-K.: If the public-private distinction is erased, what's to stop the public square from being dominated by a great big nativity scene that's offensive to a number of folks in the community?

J.W.: We've got to bring our religious convictions to the public square unapologetically in a context of a democratic and pluralistic society.

We accept the discipline of not imposing our religious sensibilities on fellow citizens.

J.W.-K.: That's a challenge!

TW

Neo-fascist culture

"There are few literary critics who take writers to task for being cynical. Amusing cynicism. Clever cruelty. Urbane selfishness — these are generally treated by literary critics as amiable qualities.

"The converse of this is that almost anybody who speaks earnestly about justice is accused of being sanctimonious. I've noticed that even *The New York Times* seldom uses the word 'righteous,' though it calls social critics 'self-righteous.' It's as though you can't even speak of righteousness without automatically being termed self-righteous. ...

"What we have here is a set of literary criteria that would have been eminently suitable to art and culture in Germany in the 1930s. Now, let me make it clear that when I say this, I'm not equating our society with Nazi Germany. As a Jew I know what the Holocaust really meant and I don't want to make sloppy or reckless comparisons. But there *is* an element of neo-fascist cruelty in our culture at the present."

— Jonathan Kozol, in an interview with Christopher Zimmerman, *The Plough*, Spring 1996

Disability rights

"On July 19 of this year, the ABC 'news' program *20/20* aired a report calling the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) excessive, expensive, and 'grossly complex.' Reporter John Stossel then urged repeal of the federal law, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Stossel claimed that the ADA makes life difficult for beleaguered business owners, echoing the rhetoric of conservative politicians who frequently cite the ADA as an example of an 'unfunded federal mandate.' It was a perfect example of scapegoating, a right-wing tactic of which people with disabilities are increasingly the targets. ...

"Disability issues are usually absent from the progressive agenda — this despite the natural affinity between our concerns. The disability-rights movement, in its radical form, measures human worth

by uniqueness and connection, rather than by productive potential; it favors the empowerment of people over the sanctification of profit. It insists on viewing disability in social contexts — the classroom, the workplace, the community. It values nonconformity. In all these ways, the disability-rights movement poses fundamental challenges to the capitalist-patriarchal status quo, just as the radical progressive movement does. ... Overall, however, the left ignores our presence, our participation, and our concerns."

— Laura Hershey, *Resist*, 9/96

"Headed for disaster"

At the same time the federal government is shifting responsibility for social services to the state and local level, many U.S. cities are restricting the operation of agencies providing the services, says Maria Foscarinis of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.

Recent zoning changes in Hartford, Conn. represent "an extreme example of the national trend," Foscarinis said. The new rules, which restrict the location of homeless shelters, hospices, treatment centers and soup kitchens, will force new providers to locate in areas that are inaccessible to those in need, critics charge. Some 30 cities across the country have enacted similar legislation.

"What we're seeing is two trends on a collision course and most likely headed for disaster," Foscarinis said.

— *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8/20/96

Toxic racism

- Minorities are twice as likely as whites to live near a hazardous waste site.
- "Treatment" of waste at contaminated sites, rather than mere "containment," has been chosen (by the Environmental Protection Agency) 22 percent more often in white neighborhoods. Containment has been chosen 7 percent more often in minority neighborhoods.

- Fines and penalties are much higher when waste sites are in white communities. Resource Conservation and Recovery Act fines have been over 500 percent higher in white areas.
- It has taken 20 percent longer to have toxic waste sites located in minority areas placed on the National Priority List.
- 57 percent of whites, 65 percent of African Americans and 80 percent of Hispanics live in counties with substandard air.
- In families with annual incomes over \$15,000, 38 percent of African-American children and 12 percent of white children had unsafe lead levels in their blood (in 1988). For those earning less than \$6,000, the rates jumped to 68 percent of African-American and 36 percent of white children.

— John G. Rodwan, Jr.

Death row defense

Roger Peter Buehl was sent to death row at the age of 22. Buehl was accused of a 1982 robbery-murder which occurred in a Villanova, Penn. mansion. One of two prosecution witnesses, when confronted with his failed lie detector tests in 1992, recanted his trial testimony. Donations can be sent to: Death Penalty Defense Fund; c/o Schuylkill Friends Meeting; 37 North Whitehorse Road; Phoenixville, PA 19460 U.S.A. For further information about Buehl, feel free to write to him: Roger Peter Buehl, AM-7936: SCI-Greene, Death Row, 1040 E. Roy Furman Highway, Waynesburg, PA 15370-8090, U.S.A.

short takes

Resisting Mammon theology

by Chung Hyun Kyung

The greatest religion of the world is capitalism. Not just capitalism, but savage capitalism. Corporations don't care how many workers they lay off, if they make more capital. This is survival of the fittest; it is unlimited production and consumption. We are all going to die because of ecological disaster in our time.

So today's major religion is not Buddhism, Christianity or Islam. People worship capitalist religion in the sanctuary. Great world market is their sanctuary. They worship their god — Mammon.

When American missionaries came to Korea, they were often symbols of American opulence. They said, "We have to civilize the savages of the world." So the savage, like me, became a Christian. But it was a capitalistic Christianity that came to our land. The Christianity we received was McDonald/Coca-Cola Christianity. They didn't pay much attention to the poor. The majority of Korean church didn't pay much attention to justice work.

In this time, we ask, do we have to discard our religion because it is so patriarchal and capitalist?

I don't think so. We have to seek very, very diligently the renewal movement in the institutional religion. We have to pay attention to people's popular religion.

When we study theology and religion in the academic setting, we think long

Chung Hyun Kyung is a feminist, liberation theologian from Korea. Chung recently accepted a faculty appointment at Union Theological Seminary in New York. This essay is adapted from an address Chung gave at Mercy College in Detroit this year. Artist **Robert Lentz** has his icons distributed by Bridge Building Icons, 211 Park St., Burlington, VT 05401.

about institutionalized, so-called great religions of the world. We study classical Buddhist text and classical Christian text. We compare these.



Chung Hyun Kyung

J.W.K.

But if you look into popular religion among the oppressed in the world, you have a totally different story. Most of the popular religions — Catholicism in Latin America and the Philippines or Buddhism in Sri Lanka, in China, in Korea — they have a totally different theology, different symbols, different teachings. Amazingly many leaders of popular religion are women, because in popular religion all is connected — cosmic spirituality and everyday needs of women's life.

When you look at popular religion, you can see a revolt of symbols and a

reinterpretation of the Bible.

When you go to the Philippines, you see many black madonnas, but when the missionaries brought Mary, it was a lily white Mary from Spain. For a long time, Filipinos changed the madonna into a black madonna because they are dark. When they demonstrate they put their madonnas in their carts and they march.

So I asked when they collapsed the Marcos regime, "Why did you use a woman — this madonna — more than a Jesus figure?" And they said, "We have a matriarchal tradition and all Filipino men, even when they have to make a final decision, have to ask their mother. This is a great time to change our history, so we have to have our mother."

It is a revolt of a symbol. People are never passive recipients of sacred texts or given symbols.

In Korea, we use these scripture verses: Wife, you must obey your husband because your husband is your head, right? Most of Korean churches are very conservative, fundamentalist churches. The wife of a very conservative church minister suddenly got this revelation: God told her, "You have to go around and speak the gospel."

Do we have to discard our religion because it is so patriarchal and capitalist? I don't think so. We have to seek very, very diligently the renewal movement.

We have to pay attention to people's popular religion.

We feminists ask this question: "The Bible said the husband is your head and you are his body, so you have to obey your husband. Is that true?" In Confucian Korean culture, the father is the head of the family. You have to obey your father and when you marry you have to obey your husband. When you become older, you have to obey your son. So this kind of Bible teaching and Confucian teaching are the best match.

This woman answers, "Yes, everything in the Bible is right. There's no fault in the Bible. Of course your husband is your head. And you are his body. But you know you are his neck, so wherever the neck goes, the head must come. That is our interpretation."

This is a great woman from the Methodists. I like her. Even in the fundamentalist church, she has this freedom to reinterpret the Bible to have some dignity in her life.

I spent some time in a Filipino community all the way out in the mountains. They say they are holy Catholic, but when you go there they speak something very different. They have a *prima* — she's a pope and all their priests are women. They believe in Father, Mother, Son Jesus and Holy Spirit. For those in the matriarchal Filipino tradition, you cannot just have Father, Son and Holy Spirit — it's not complete. You should have a Mother. So they make — not a trinity — but four deities: Father, Mother, Son and Holy Spirit. They say the second coming of Jesus should be as a woman to balance the whole thing.

I thought, "My gosh, I spent 20 years of my life to get to the conclusion that a woman has a right in Christian history and the Christian church, concluding that we have to change Christianity even more with the feminine experience of the divine, et cetera, but these people, they have lived it the last 350 years!"

That is the power of popular religion. So I encourage all my students in feminism and religious studies, "Look into every religion, but also learn popular religion — people's symbols, people's

stories, people's paintings and their devotions. What do they say? They say one thing to their priest and their institutional catechism, then they live another thing in their life. There's a hidden theology." We have to be very clear about our criteria to discern any kind of sacred experience

tuality. Get rid of it.

Third — a very important thing — community building. You can have all kinds of individual spirituality and say, "I don't care what other people feel." Some kinds of New Age spirituality say if you change your inside, everything will be fine. But no! So many New Age people pray, but the President of France still conducted all these nuclear tests in the Pacific islands. I have more respect for Greenpeace people who risk their lives doing something in the Pacific.

Your spirituality must be renewed and connected with your participation, your commitment to change the system by working for the common good, working for justice and for solidarity.

We have to choose what is life-giving in Christianity. I don't want to take a Greek, Hellenistic, German or American interpretation of Christianity. I need an Asian perspective.

What I accept is the stories of Jesus — the Jesus movement, the kingdom of God (we don't want a king) and radical equality in which there is no Jew, no Greek, no free, no slave, no male, no female.

You have to make a decision about what makes Christianity Christian with the wisdom of your community. Just talking about Jesus doesn't make Christianity Christian. The German church supported Naziism during the holocaust. So you can be Christian and make all sorts of bad things. To really think about what makes Christianity Christian, you have to choose the healthy Christianity, not the Coca-Cola, patriarchal, homophobic Christianity.

TW

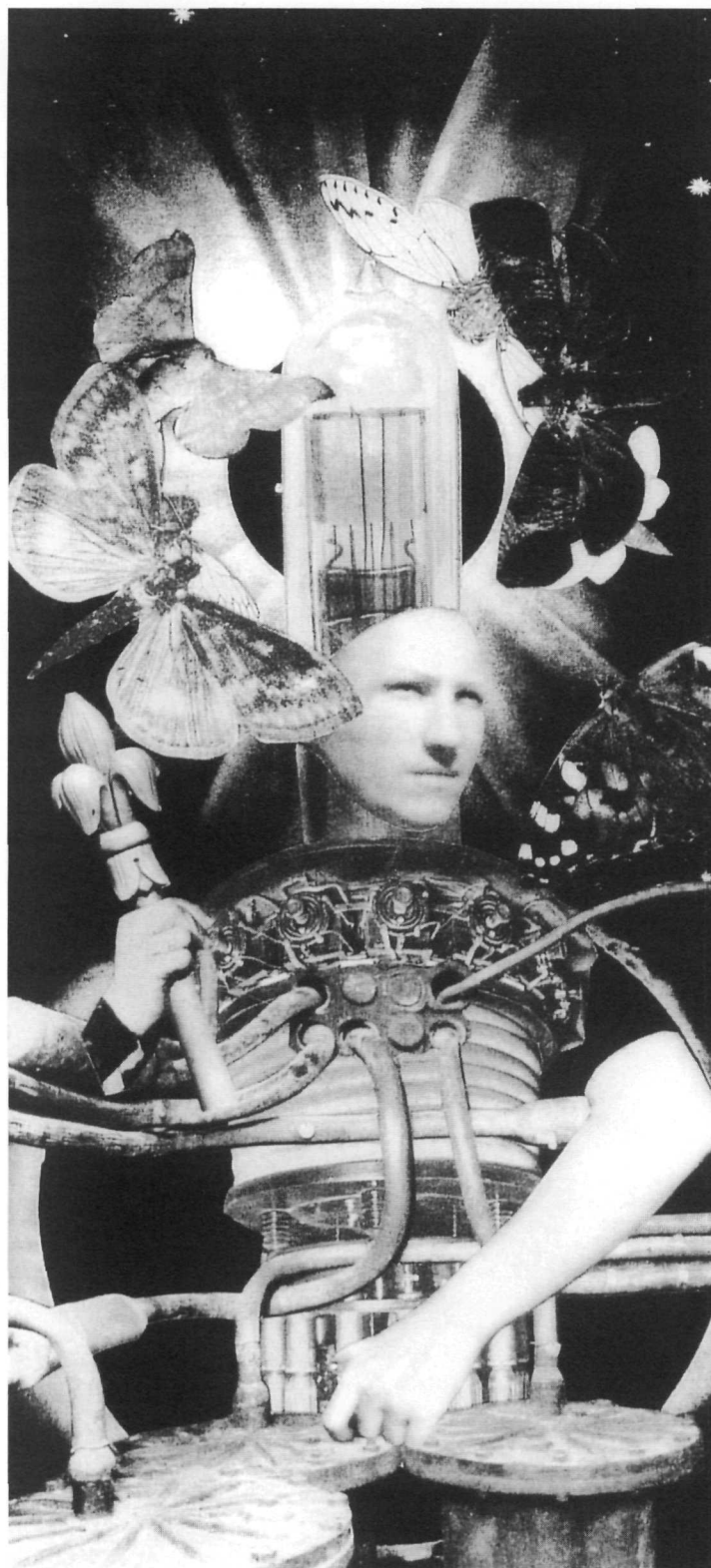


Protectress of the Oppressed

Robert Lentz

and spirituality. I have three criteria. First, whether this experience of the sacred promotes survival and sustenance of the most oppressed people in the society. It's a litmus paper. If it promotes the survival and sustenance of the most wounded people in that society, that sacred experience has something real there.

The second criteria is whether it is liberating or life-giving. If it makes you more oppressed — dying inside, suffocated, colonized — it's not a good spiri-



The Genius

Marek Czarnecki

Trying to remain human: views on political action

[We asked a variety of people to comment on some of the myths put forward by the Christian Right and to explain a way they are resisting narrow-minded, rigid ideologies. Most agree that the Right in this country is simply symptomatic of a deeper and more centrist threat to our lives. The demons are as they have ever been in the U.S. — economic exploitation, racism, sexism and environmental destruction. We offer here a variety of ways to free ourselves from constrictive thinking and fear.]

Calling on spiritual roots

Jim Carnes, acting director of the Teaching Tolerance Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center:

I find that simply identifying myself as a Christian with an alternative point of view is a step toward breaking up the image of a monolithic Christianity that the Right seems to want to create. Here in Alabama we have an organized Christian alternative to the Christian Right, called the Alabama Christian Faith Alliance. I think so-called liberals have been squeamish about blending political and religious action because we want to defend the separation of church and state. But it's an exciting challenge to maintain belief in separation while letting ourselves talk openly about our faith in a political context.

The Southern Poverty Law Center is perhaps best known for its litigation against hate groups, which are few in number but make a lot of noise. They give the impression that they're gaining ground and that hate is dividing the country more and more deeply. But we at the Teaching Tolerance Project find that there are countless teachers all around the country who are really concerned with laying the foundation for children to be self-respecting and respecting of others.

I recently visited a school in Denver which, judging by its location and the statistical profile of the student body, meets the stereotypical criteria for a school which would have low performance and a high rate of truancy. But there is a kindergarten teacher there who has created an oasis for her children, using the simplest means available. She greets the children in a formal, respectful way each morning. She teaches them simple manners. She obtains flowers free from a local wholesaler, and teaches them how to arrange flowers in a vase. She helps them learn about each other's cultures, and the particulars of each others' families. She fosters an appreciation for

Artist **Marek Czarnecki** lives in Bristol, Conn. Artist **Helen David Brancato** lives in Philadelphia, Penn.

beauty and silence and their own inner thoughts — and it is transformative! The children are consistently performing above grade level in reading and other skills. This school is one of thousands I see that give the lie to the prevailing prognosis that we're going down the tubes.

Modeling respectful, caring behavior towards others is the most direct and powerful way of communicating to children. We have to examine the way we treat friends and acquaintances and perfect strangers. We have to make an effort to reach out beyond our narrowly defined groups, to bring people of varied backgrounds into our own lives and our children's lives.

Demythologizing our origins

Paul Buhle, co-author of *Images of American Radicalism*:

It's clear those on the Right are developing a version of history in which the Founding Fathers were godly men and America's revolutionaries were fighting with sober integrity for family values and moral virtue.

But history is, of course, more ambiguous. In fact, one could conclude that the most essential message of those early days is that pluralistic coalitions and rebellion are truly American.

In 1776, there was a clear anti-monarchical movement, as well as discontent among working people, Indians and slaves. Without the upsurge from below and the propaganda campaigns of radical intellectuals, the Revolution would never have begun. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1775), one of the greatest political pamphlets ever published, went to the core of the problem — and the solution: "We have in our power to begin the world all over again," he wrote, by overthrowing the aristocracy and the monarchy. The unrest of "Jack Tar" sailors against impressment (forcible enlistment on ships), long preceding the revolutionary

crisis, set the stage for the Stamp Act Riots of 1765. The upper-class leadership of Boston carefully guided the campaign, but relied upon craftsmen and unskilled workers meeting at taverns or social clubs to organize direct actions.

It was ordinary folk who took the bullets in the "Boston Massacre" of 1770, and the same class who did nearly all of the fighting in the war to follow. The "vagabond army of ragamuffins" fought to victory, finally demanding discharge when the war ended. Many went home to participate in food riots and even uprisings, like Shay's rebellion in Massachusetts in 1786 or Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebellion in the 1790s.

Indians took the brunt of the postwar expansion — including those who had been promised benefits for fighting with the colonists. And black slaves were bound more tightly through a new national government. And yet, the principles of rebellion against authority, once established, could not be extirpated by the demands for "order."

Living for inclusion

Linda Strohmer, former *Evangelism officer for the Episcopal Church and currently serving three parishes in New Jersey*:

Stonewall happened in 1968, the shot that started the lesbian/gay revolution. Our daughter was born — multiply handicapped — in 1970. After her birth, my husband, always "moody," began a long slide into the depths of clinical depression. He slept more and more, was less and less interested in life. Only rage, it seemed, in occasional flashes, could energize him. After a couple of years, he



even lost his voice: chronic laryngitis. This decline lasted nearly four years.

Like so many marriages of the sixties, we were "soul mates," each other's best friend and confidante, but it finally got to be too much for me. I pushed him into therapy. Over the next months, working with a psychiatrist, he began to unravel his agony, his darkness, his rage. After about a year, late one night, he choked out his deepest, most agonized confession: he was gay. He had come to face it in therapy. He was sure I would abominate him.

My first reaction: relief. The dysfunctions of our marriage, the depths of his depression were not my fault. This confession felt deeply truthful, as if it were something I had always known but never acknowledged. I told him it was okay, I loved him.

From that time on, his depression lifted, almost miraculously. The first to heal was his laryngitis. Freud was right: since David couldn't speak of his truest self, he couldn't speak at all! As his voice returned, so his spirit burgeoned. He grew stronger, surer, confident. As he began to accept himself, he regained energy for work, for living, for our daughter.

David died of AIDS in 1989. He died as a man who knew himself and could be honest with himself and everyone else. He was gay and proud, a good father and a good friend. During the years of hiding his true self from himself, he was miserable and unable to respond fully to life, anxious, bound. When Maggie was born with so much damage, his crippling guilt told him it was punishment for his being gay. Unable to live with that guilt, he offloaded it onto me, secretly blaming me for what happened to Maggie. Guilt and blame kill and maim a whole family. It was terrible for us all.

As he grew able to accept himself as he was created, absolved and set free, we all bloomed.

Why do I campaign for the church's full acceptance and embrace of gay and lesbian people? In David I witnessed the gospel story of the Bent Woman, whom Jesus healed and freed. I've seen with my own heart what it meant to a whole family for that bound man to be set free.

The "good news of God in Christ" is that we are all loved and forgiven, called to live into who we are created to be. As a priest, sworn to "nourish Christ's people by the riches of his grace," how can I not stand firm and proclaim that "for freedom Christ has set us free"?

Love in the congregation

Butch Naters Gamarra, rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Boston, Mass.:

The place where I am focussing a lot of energy to combat some of the Religious Right is in teaching and education, trying to help St. Stephen's congregation understand that the Gospel has so much to do with our daily living and politics.

The way the Gospel addresses politics is very straightforward. Jesus is not neutral; he takes sides. We forget that and we try to become so democratic that we are wishy-washy.

The context hasn't changed much. We are still dealing with oppression, class, race, economics and gender. When Jesus dealt with women, his own disciples asked, "Why is he sitting by this well and talking with a woman? Is he crazy?"

As we look at the Gospel today, God is speaking to us. We have to see how it addresses *our* context. At St. Stephen's we do that in a dialogue sermon.

Scripture is inviting us to take certain action. We have to name the demon. In the case of "welfare reform" or changing immigration policies, we have to say this is not "expedient"; this is not "fiscally responsible"; it is immoral. These policies affect the very ones with whom Jesus took sides.

Peter asked how many times we have to forgive. A woman in the congregation explained that she has a friend whom she has forgiven many times. She said it is hard and she broke out in tears. The people answered her back saying what they heard in the Scriptures. By the end she felt ministered to by everyone in the congregation. That's, I think, a very good way to deal with some of the mean-spirited evil in our society.

Love in General Convention

Pamela Chinnis, president of the Episcopal Church's House of Deputies:

With all the political talk of "family values," I'm concerned that so many people don't demonstrate a commitment to those values in their own lives. Within the church, I'm convinced the House of Deputies could be a microcosm of the community we'd like to foster in the society at large. I'd like people to look at the way we work together and be able to say, "Look, see how they love one another." If people like Louie Crew [a gay deputy from Newark, one of the church's most liberal dioceses] and Judy Mayo [a deputy from Fort Worth, one of the church's most conservative dioceses] can stand on the floor of the House and give a common witness as they did at the last General Convention, then we've really got something.

The disagreement over sexuality, structure and other issues is so strong in the church these days that there is great potential for divisiveness at next year's General Convention in Philadelphia. There has to be an honesty on everyone's part about their differences, otherwise the discourse is superficial and there's only a veneer of civility. Our legislative process



allows everyone, even those with a minority position, to have a voice. But it is essential that everyone be treated with respect. I have great faith in the leadership of the legislative committees to set the tone for constructive debate.

I'm passionate in my belief in the church and what it can accomplish, but we're not doing nearly enough. I would like to see it taking more of a leadership role in society generally. We've abdicated responsibility in that area and many feel the church is irrelevant. I think we can change that.

Pursuing political action

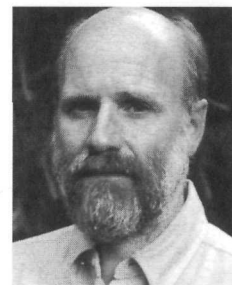
Chuck Matthei, president of Equity Trust, Inc., a non-profit organization with an innovative program of land reform and community development finance:

When Gandhi sent thousands of people into the villages to help with community projects, he understood that the movement was building skills to take the victory and do something with it.

It wasn't the media that persuaded impoverished peasants to relate to a larger political ideal; it was the thousands of people sent into villages — they formed a communication network and also showed a face to the network.

Working for social change depends on your personal character, your contribution to the community and your track record. My experience in the movement here is that there has never been a deliberate effort to integrate these three pieces.

I get frustrated with the Clam Shell Alliance's debates about property destruction. The issue is not whether you cut the fence, but whether you use discipline and order: Don't rush the fence; cut the fence



'Audaciously trusting God'

by William Stringfellow

There is no convenient set of rules, no simple blueprint, no simplistic ethics of decision for the Christian. The Christian witness in society does not consist of praising and practicing the "Golden Rule," which, after all, is a secular ethic of self-interest that demeans the essence of the Gospel. But there are at least some clues about the style of witness characteristic of the Christian life in the world, both for the Church as such and for the individual member of the Church.

1) *Realism*: Christians are those who take history very seriously. They regard the actual day-to-day existence of the world realistically, as a way of acknowledging and honoring God's own presence and action in the real world in which human beings live and fight and love and vote and work and die. And Christians know, more sensitively and sensibly than other people, that this world is a fallen world, not an evil world but the place in which death is militant and aggressive and at work in all things. Of all people, Christians are the most blunt and relentless realists. They are free to face the world as it is without flinching, without shock, without fear, without surprise, without embarrassment, without sentimentality, without guile or disguise. They are free to live in the world as it is.

William Stringfellow was a lawyer and theologian in the Episcopal Church before his death in 1985. This article is excerpted from *Dissenter in a Great Society*, 1966, reprinted in *Keeper of the Word*, Eerdmans, 1994.

2) *Inconsistency*: Christians, in their fidelity to the Gospel in their witness in this world, will appear inconsistent to others in public views and positions. They cannot be put into a neat pigeonhole, their stances and conduct are never easily predictable. They know that no institution, no ideology, no nation, no form of government, no society, can heal the brokenness or prevail against the power of death.

3) *Radicalism*: That means, of course, that the posture of Christians is inherently and consistently radical. Christians are perpetually in the position of complaining about the *status quo*, whatever it happens to be. Their insight and experience of reconciliation in Christ are such that no estate in secular society can possibly correspond to, or much approximate, the true society of which they are citizens in Christ.

The Christian political witness is the audacity to trust that God's love for this world's existence is redeeming, so Christians are human beings free to live in this world by grace in all practical matters and decisions.

They are — everywhere, in every society — aliens. They are always, in any society, in protest. Even when a cause

which they have themselves supported prevails, they will not be content but will be the first to complain against the "new" *status quo*.

4) *Intercession*: Christians are concerned, politically, for all people in all the diversity of problems and issues of public life. Characteristically, the sign of the inclusiveness and extremity of Christian concern is represented and embodied in their specific care for those who, in a given time in society, are the least in that society, for those whom all the rest have ignored or forgotten or cast out or otherwise have abandoned to death.

Christians know that their passion for the world, their involvement in society, their stand in politics, their witness in the present age, encompass even their own enemies, even those whom they oppose in some specific controversy, even those who would deny the freedom of their witness, even those who hate them, and especially those who are threatened by Christian witness.

The Christian political witness, for the individual Christian and for the body of the Church, means demonstrating in and to the world what the true society is by the living example of the society of the Church.

The Christian political witness is affirming and loving the essential humanity of all in Christ in the midst of humanity's abdication of human life and despite the whole array of death's assaults against human life.

The Christian political witness is the audacity to trust that God's love for this world's existence is redeeming, so Christians are human beings free to live in this world by grace in all practical matters and decisions.

in waves. One of the reasons I haven't liked plowshares actions very well is that they depend on an element of secrecy. It's easy to turn everything into a guerrilla exercise where the physical becomes predominant. We must be careful not to suggest that we have to match power. If we do, then they're going to win. This has to be a process of changing people. Cutting fences or burning draft files is fine, if it accomplishes that.

When I worked at the Institute for Community Economics I used to say that the projects we worked on were useful, but we were building a foundation that would take at least 10 years. And we've now proved that ICE offers credible proposals and constructive contributions.

Taking time

Joe Agne, former Racial Justice Program Director for the National Council of Churches and current outreach coordinator for Sojourners:

As an evangelical person who grew up in the Evangelical United Brethren Church but who is now a United Methodist pastor, there are many positions of the radical Religious Right with which I disagree. Their positions on many issues are grounded in a not very thinly veiled sexism. Their recent conversion on racism is a tad disingenuous.

Yet, it makes no sense to lay all the hate of the nation at the feet of the radical Religious Right. We on the Left are tempted, among other things, toward quick fix ideas. The temptation of magic says somehow everything will be made right. It won't take struggle, commitment, resourcefulness, faith, solidarity, generations, centuries. Life becomes a problem to be solved rather than a mystery to be entered. We just need to use a little Yankee ingenuity. The scientific method will work. Define the problem. Conjure up some models of response. Pick the right one. Implement it. *Presto!*

A number of years ago I served a pastorate in the south suburbs of Chicago. Among the ministries of the congregation was a concerted challenge to the real estate industry for its racial steering, i.e., showing homes to African Americans in certain communities and to whites in other communities. Working with other groups under the leadership of an open housing organization, realtors were tested, sued and found guilty. Agreements were gained and signed by realtors, municipalities and open housing advocates.

In spite of this work, both the suburb and the congregation continued to lose white residents and members. The flight was on. But who was moving? There are exceptions to the following generalization, but when I was invited back for an anniversary celebration I discovered many of the white open housing advocates had moved to other nearby communities and congregations which had lower percentages of black persons in them. They had contributed lots of energy, time, expertise and finances to confronting the real estate industry, but when racism in housing did not immediately go away they moved on to other places and issues.

Our efforts against racism and poverty are divided by sexism and homophobia. Our efforts against militarism and homophobia are divided by classism and racism. With our quick fix-ation we don't take time to see the disconnections, connections and intersections.

So we end welfare as we know it, dismantle affirmative action, and undercut voting rights. People who were never for these things in the first place declare them unsuccessful or no longer needed. And the rest of us go along, looking for the next cause to undertake.

What would happen in this country if movements joined together in key times and places, and workers, women, people of color, homosexuals, environmentalists, pacifists and anti-colonialists some-

how found a way to struggle together against oppression?

It is long, hard and dangerous work to join struggles in timely coalitions (please — not one big movement). It seems especially difficult for white people to be followers, not leaders, in such coalitions. So often we lead or leave. We prefer single issues with focused, winnable goals. Then we can declare victory and go on to something else, or just go home. It is easier to blame the radical Religious Right for injustice than to deal with our own fickleness and lack of stamina.

Leaning into rigidity

Verna Dozier, champion of lay power and author of The Dream of God:

I think a word has been left out of the serpent's temptation. I think the serpent said to Eve, "God knows when you eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The word that has been left out, I think, is "absolutely." You will be like God, knowing *absolutely* what is good and what is evil.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, Paul told them that they had been rescued from the power of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

What is the power of darkness? I am increasingly convinced that the power of darkness is our need to be right.

In the kingdom of God's beloved Son, we are always accepted. Paul Tillich's great sermon, "You are accepted though unacceptable," echoed an earlier great Paul, "Nothing in all creation will separate us from the love of God" — not even our rightness. **TW**



Episcopal Women's Caucus at 25: a bittersweet celebration

by Julie A. Wortman

About 150 members of the Episcopal Women's Caucus (EWC) made a pilgrimage to the organization's birthplace in Alexandria, Va., last September 27-28 to celebrate 25 years of sustained struggle to open the priesthood and episcopate of the Episcopal Church to women — and to develop an agenda for the future. The gathering proved to be a bittersweet reminder, however, that continuing the good fight for "a church that honors and rejoices in the ministry of all women" will likely require dealing with prejudices and assumptions within EWC's own ranks that some meeting participants said may be preventing it from being an effective advocate for lay women and women of color.

In her keynote address, Pamela Chinnis, one of those present at the 1971 conference on women's ministries held at Virginia Theological Seminary that launched the EWC, enumerated the changes women in the church have seen during the past 25 years. "In 1971 there were a handful of women in the diaconate; today there must be nearly 2,000 in the diaconate and priesthood, and six women are part of the historical episcopate in this country," she said. "Then there were about two dozen women among the 800 members of the House of Deputies [which had only begun seating women the previous year]; now nearly half the lay deputies and more than 70 clerical deputies are women and, as you know, I

am in my second term as President of the House of Deputies. Then we had a prayer book and a hymnal with unrelievedly patriarchal language about people and God; now our official worship texts have cleaned up much of the 'people' language and a growing number of resources for inclusive 'God' language are authorized."

But Chinnis also noted that "there are



Episcopal Women's Caucus delegates from Fort Worth, Tex., lead the procession at the 25th anniversary celebration.

still places in the church where the ministry of ordained women is devalued, dismissed, denied" and where "women's participation in administration and governance is token, where our labor is exploited and underpaid, where we are ignored or patronized."

A companion keynote presentation by Los Angeles priest Carmen Guerrero

pointed to another challenge, this time for the EWC itself.

"Only God knows what the next 25 years hold for the Episcopal Women's Caucus, but if it is to move into the future with a vision for mutual responsibility with and for all women of the world [and not just white women], it will have to be willing to walk into the desert where nothing is familiar," Guerrero said. "My question is this: Can you respect the dignity of every woman to discover who she is for herself, even if it turns out to be totally different from your idea of consciousness?"

Panel discussions focussing on remembering the past 25 years and inviting members' visions for the future raised questions about the effects of the EWC's largely single-minded focus on winning women's access to the ranks of the ordained.

"The irony is that [although lay women worked very hard for women's ordination], the leadership roles for women in the church coming up won't be lay roles — they will be ordained," said Ann Scheibner, a lay EWC activist who helped orchestrate the historic vote for women's ordination at the 1976 General Convention in Minneapolis. "Are we attracting the energy and commitment of younger, lay women?"

Byron Rushing, a longtime General Convention deputy from Massachusetts who dated his first involvement with the EWC to the 1974 Philadelphia ordinations held at the inner-city black parish of the Church of the Advocate ("I came

because I was afraid that those black



Julie A. Wortman is managing editor of *The Witness*.

folks were going to get in trouble for hosting the ordinations," he confided), spoke of his vision for a church that can now begin to end its "clerical captivity."

"The women's ordination debate began when there was also beginning to be talk about the ministry of all the baptized and not just of the clergy," he pointed out. "But women needed *the option* to choose ordination." Now the EWC can begin working for a church where "we all understand that we are *all* ministers as an intentional part of our daily lives and work."

Some of the few assembly participants of color spoke to EWC's almost exclusively white membership (two board members are African Americans). "When you look around this room, who is not here?" asked

Dawn Conley. "I don't see many women of color."

Conley's mother, Judy Conley, a past president of the Union of Black Episcopalians and a member of the national church's Executive Council, echoed her daughter's concern. "I am not part of your history," she said, "but I would like to be part of your future. Unless some things change, that won't happen."

Other EWC members pointed out that it may also be time to question long-held assumptions about the efficacy of hierarchical leadership.

"We need to look at new ways of being leaders," remarked Jane Dixon, suffragan bishop of Washington. "I know I'm speaking from my position as a suffragan

bishop, but I think two heads can be better than one."

No one knows what the next 25 years will be like for the EWC, but the conversation at this anniversary gathering seemed clearly to signal that the future will see an entirely new array of issues on the organization's agenda. Still, for women like EWC vice president Katie Sherrod, who told this gathering that "for some of us it's a daily decision to stay in the church" because of the overwhelming sexism she and others who live in dioceses that won't ordain women experience, the old issues are still relevant.

"You need to remember," she told her EWC sisters in Alexandria, "you're past is still our future."

Title IV revisited

Last month the Episcopal Church's bishops had their first chance to discuss revisions to the church's national canons that would formalize the procedures for disciplining members of their house who are charged with wrongdoing. The proposed changes, presented during the bishops' interim meeting in the Poconos by their chief drafter, Minnesota chancellor Sally Johnson, on behalf of the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons, are aimed at requiring that bishops be held to a similar level of accountability for their actions as other clergy, especially in the area of non-doctrinal offenses.

"We've been in a place where collegiality [between bishops] has been more important than accountability," said Robert Royce, a consultant to the Commission who was the principal drafter of the first round of revisions to the Title IV disciplinary canons passed at the 1994 General Convention in Indianapolis. The bishops have relied on an informal, behind-closed-doors procedure of settling disciplinary problems that depends on the "pastoral" leadership of the presiding bishop and his appointed episcopal advisors, Royce explained.

"The question that lurks is what happens when the informal procedure doesn't work out" because a bishop-

offender refuses to cooperate. A proposal that the presiding bishop be given the power to temporarily inhibit a bishop while an accusation of wrongdoing is being addressed could be helpful in such situations, he said, noting, however, that such "metro-political authority" has been something this province of the Anglican communion has avoided giving its primate out of a fierce belief in equality among bishops.

The Commission's proposed revisions also respond to repeated requests from priests and deacons that there be some parity between how they and the bishops are treated.

Under the current system it is entirely possible that a bishop who sexually exploits a member of his diocese, for example, could be allowed quietly to retire or take an extended leave of absence without being forced to give up episcopal orders, while the rector of a congregation who has done the same thing to a church member could be tried in ecclesiastical court and deposed.

"The proposals clearly reduce what has been called a 'double standard' of accountability under which bishops and other clergy receive quite different treatment in disciplinary matters," a press release issued by the National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations (NNECA) before the bishops' meeting stated.

The NNECA endorsement and another one from the Episcopal Women's Caucus passed during its 25th anniversary meeting in Alexandria, Va., came a little more than a month after Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning's chancellor, David Beers, faxed a series of strong objections to the draft revisions to the Commission during a three-day meeting in Portland, Ore., in late August, after a deadline for comments had passed.

Many proponents of improved disciplinary parity — and of such provisions as a review committee and a trial court for non-doctrinal offenses that would be made up of, in addition to bishops, lay people and priests or deacons — had feared that Beer's criticisms of the revisions might be shared by many of the bishops. Johnson, however, reported no "groundswell of opinion against seeing how parallel the disciplinary canons can appropriately be made" at the bishops' October meeting.

"We asked the bishops for feedback on the proposed revisions and we've begun to receive their comments," Johnson said.

"We are also in the process of setting up a meeting with the presiding bishop and Mr. Beers to make certain that we are all listening to one another's points of view."

— Julie A. Wortman

'Bishop-bashers' push for accountability

by Katie Sherrod

Two years ago a group of lay people and clergy in the Diocese of Rio Grande became concerned about their bishop, Terence Kelshaw, and his increasing public hostility toward, and distorted portrayal of, the national church. They also expressed concern about reported instances of repressive behavior towards individuals, vestries, and clerics who differ with Kelshaw's conservative views and authoritarian style of leadership.

Kelshaw is one of the 10 bishops who brought charges against former bishop of Iowa, Walter Righter, for ordaining a partnered gay man in 1990.

When attempts to meet individually and collectively with the bishop were either rebuffed or met with animosity, the group formed the Episcopal Information Network (EIN). EIN describes itself as "an organized group of concerned clergy and lay persons in the Diocese of the Rio Grande" who intend to "gather and distribute accurate and factual information that will contribute to a balanced view of the Episcopal Church and the place of the diocese within it."

EIN said it would also encourage church members to take a more active part in diocesan affairs and "offer a forum in which opinions and concerns may be freely shared."

EIN began publishing *Network News*, a quarterly publication, to "publish news and opinions that shed light on the health of this Diocese and the nature of its relationship to the National Church. We invite thoughtful discourse regarding church life, moral choice, and the manner in which decisions are made and carried

out in this Diocese."

The group also set up a home page on the World Wide Web (<http://www.nmia.com/~ein/>) and began connecting with the larger church electronically via ECUNET.

Within weeks of its birth, EIN was attacked by Kelshaw and his supporters for being "unChristian" and for "bishop-bashing."

Undaunted, EIN held its first diocesan-wide meeting this past September. It was attended by more than 90 people.

The theme of the gathering, held on a rare rainy day at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, was "Keeping the Faith — Proclaiming the Truth."

Laura Hughes, EIN president, opened the assembly by reasserting the group's commitment to nonviolence, offering this distinction: "The revolutionary attempts to force change. The nonviolent are willing to allow truth to be the agent of change."

Wales to ordain women

The Anglican Church of Wales approved the ordination of women to the priesthood by the necessary two-thirds vote in September. Bishops and laity voted in favor of the change two years ago but it failed with clergy. This time it passed by a single vote among clergy.

Archbishop of Wales Alwyn Rice Jones said that continuing to oppose women in the priesthood would leave Welsh Anglicans isolated from the rest of the church. The Church of England, the Church of Ireland and the Scottish Episcopal Church have already ordained women to the priesthood.

It is estimated that nearly 80 women deacons will be ordained in Wales in the coming months.

— *Episcopal News Service*

Hughes said EIN also believes "that to remain apathetic in the face of a lie is worse than being violent."

But as EIN member Arnold Padilla pointed out during a panel on issues of power, authority, and accountability, "the church is not very good about holding bishops accountable."

Among the abuses of power EIN is protesting are "discrimination and exclusion in the ordination process" and "canonical violations and distortions."

During his luncheon address, Louie Crew, founder of Integrity, an Episcopal Church group which works for justice for gay and lesbian church members, urged gathering participants to work to distinguish between personal injustice and systemic injustice, and to focus their energies on the systemic injustices.

"Sometimes the whole point of pain is to shock us into hearing God," Crew said. "I believe the first two gifts of the Spirit are a sense of history and a ticklebox. Keep your sense of humor."

Gail Joralemon, a United Church of Christ minister, echoed that sentiment in an afternoon panel on ways of both staying connected with the larger church and getting it to understand and care about what is happening in the diocese.

"I believe you are called to be a thorn in the side of the institutional church," she said, adding that servanthood is a rejection of *abuse* of power, not a rejection of power, and that EIN must make its case on the grounds of justice, not pain.

Joralemon urged participants to keep in focus that this battle is not about the bishop, but about the church.

The day ended with the group reaffirming its commitment to the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Rio Grande, in the world beyond, and especially to the Episcopal Church's General Convention. In a pointed gesture, the offering at the closing eucharist went to the national church to support the budget that, while approved unanimously by the deputies the Diocese of Rio Grande sent to the 1994 General Convention, has since been ignored by the diocese's own convention.

Katie Sherrod, vice-president of the Episcopal Women's Caucus, lives in the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth where Jack Iker, diocesan bishop, refuses to ordain women to the priesthood. EIN can be reached by "snail mail" at P.O. Box 36688, Albuquerque, NM, 87176-6688.

Restoring the soul of a church

by Gay Jennings

***Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct*, Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Laaser, editors, The Alban Institute, Collegeville, MN 1995.**

This is a book about despair and hope, betrayal and accountability, loss and restoration. It is a book about the destructive nature of secrets and the redemptive power of truth telling. It is a book that should alternately make you weep, make you angry, and give you confidence in the healing power of justice-making and the promise of new life in Christ. It is a book you should read, especially if you are a bishop who has vowed to "defend those who have no helper."

Restoring the Soul of a Church is a compelling collection of essays by nationally known experts in the field of clergy sexual misconduct. Editors Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Laaser have assembled therapists, physicians, educators, consultants, denominational executives, and journalists who approach the issue sensitively and with compassion for all parties.

Collectively the contributors provide a wealth of information along with effective strategies for those who are confronted with clergy sexual misconduct on any level. The book's core theological premise is that the Church, as an agent of God, is called always to pastoral response and compassion, accountability and justice, and healing and restoration for everyone affected. The book's institutional premise is that the Church must be a place where people can come with their deepest wounds and vulnerabilities and be safe.

Gay Jennings is the Cannon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of Ohio and serves as the case manager for sexual misconduct in the diocese.

This book is not only about victim-survivors. It provides a comprehensive look at everyone affected by boundary violations in church settings: victim-survivors, offenders (called "unhealed wounders" by one contributor) as well as the host of "secondary victims," including the families of victim-survivors and offenders, non-offending clergy, congregations and their afterpastors, and the wider church.

There appears to be an undercurrent of weariness and resentment in the church today that so much time and energy is spent on clergy sexual misconduct. The newly revised disciplinary canons, background investigations, and whether or not clergy are fairly treated are the hottest topics of discussion, not the damage done to the people of God. I still hear people strike out at that "terrible woman who caused us to lose our poor beloved pastor through her seductive and manipulative ways." One congregant not only blamed the victim but suggested she should be destroyed in the same way she destroyed the priest. Still others believe all this attention distracts us from the mission of the Church—to which I counter, if the mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ, this is not distracting work. It is essential ministry.

I understand why some might want to avoid this book like the plague. Sexual misconduct in ministry makes us uncomfortable. Many do not want to believe, in fact will do almost anything not to believe, that clergy sometimes take advantage of another person's vulnerability. Discomfort or disbelief should not lead anyone to believe this is a bad news book. It is a Good News book that calls the Church to respond with compassion and justice for all the parties affected. Both victim-survivors and offenders need to be assured that there is

not retaliation on a spiritual level, that neither God nor we have abandoned them.

Sexual misconduct by clergy takes a devastating toll. We must find hope for those victimized, the offenders, and the congregations affected and we must respond to the enormous spiritual, emotional and systemic pain. I recently received a letter from a man who was sexually abused by a priest when he was a teenager. He wrote about the Church's response, saying he learned, "God was not punishing me for anything I did wrong ... I learned God would never harm me when I found God would inspire those doing the right thing. ... It is not the story of 'my abuse.' It is bigger than that. It is a story of how God knows right from wrong, God does not forget those of us who get lost. God hears the poor in spirit and God liberates people from their distress."

This is what it means to restore the soul of a Church.

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— Sam T. Cobb
Letter to the Editor, May 1993

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Healing apocalyptic visions

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

The Coming of the Millennium, by Darrell J. Fasching, Trinity Press International, 1996

Karl Barth is reported once to have said that a Christian would be crazy to teach universal salvation, but impious not to believe it. In his view, the final and irresistible word is God's grace.

Some will say that Darrell Fasching is crazy. He has set out not merely to teach universal salvation but to preach it as the essential form of the gospel for "the coming of the millennium."

His little book by that title, a thoughtful and popularly readable tract, is mindful that this "good news for the whole human race" goes against not only that imperial gospel of evangelical conquest characteristic of the millennium now passing away but also of the xenophobia so widespread at the moment and particularly fed by the judgmental apocalypticism current on the Right and represented popularly by the likes of Pat Robertson (see *Witness* review 10/96) or Hal Lindsey.

Christians, Fasching contends, have set out to eliminate strangers, first by conversion, making them over into our own image, but also, barring that, by consigning them to the fire of damnation — for which the holocaust stands as literal emblem in the 20th century. (Fasching himself comes to this book from two substantial works on that topic, *Narrative Theology After Auschwitz* and *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima*.)

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is a Methodist pastor and author of *Seasons of Faith and Conscience* (Orbis, 1991).

"Christians are called to be the salt of the earth, not to turn the whole earth into salt. Spiritually speaking that would be a major ecological catastrophe."

Since there is sufficient scriptural warrant for some being cast into the outer darkness where wailing and gnashing of teeth, not to mention flames of fire, are the order of the day, Fasching's book is largely a biblical argument. It lifts up a neglected set of texts (like 1 Tim. 4:10, where Christ is said to be "the Savior of all people, especially those who believe"), while it reworks other passages.

He is not the first to reread the Babel account with a postmodern take, but he marshals it well. The pretention and sin of Babel is its centralized conformity, the cultural imperialism of sameness, all in the service of power. God's remedy to this idolatry is not so much the curse of confusion but the blessing of diversity which indeed undermines and subverts the imperial project.

"Christians are called to be the salt of the earth, not to turn the whole earth into salt."

God comes to us, Fasching contends, in the guise and difference of the stranger. Did you know the most often repeated command of Torah, 36 times no less, is the admonition to hospitality? Think of Abraham welcoming the very presence of God in those three unknown messengers. Sodom's sin is not the strangeness of homosexuality so assaulted today (partly by means of this very text), but the hostility and violent assault which that city shows those strangers of God. There is Jacob wrestling with the stranger at

Piniel, the one who cannot and will not be named, but who yields a wound and a blessing.

To those who say that we can be saved by "no other name" than that of Jesus, Fasching replies that "Jesus" means "YHWH saves" which means in turn precisely that we are saved by "I am," a God who can be neither named nor imaged.

Though we tend to make him over in our own images, Jesus is himself the stranger: despised, rejected, cast out and assaulted by the violence of city and empire. Fasching may miss a small bet in his discussion of crucified love, not to draw in the letter to the Hebrews. The book which commends Christians to practice hospitality "because in this way some have entertained angels unaware," also underscores Jesus being crucified "outside the gate."

Baptism, Fasching observes, is the sacrament not of exclusion but of universal salvation. Infant baptism testifies especially in this regard. There we welcome the one unknown, the newborn stranger, and we witness that the grace of God's saving power proceeds beyond all human decision. There has never been a child born who could not be baptized.

This is the gospel which Darrell Fasching has nailed to the door of the next millennium, his theses for a new reformation. It is not a gospel which will be welcome in communities fond of declaring God's judgment and consigning enemies to darkness or death. It will seem strange to many of us. That, however, may yet prove to be part and parcel of its saving power. **TW**

review

One of the hardest things Pat Clark ever did was to visit an African American woman whose son had been lynched by a Klan group, to ask her to request that the state not pursue the death penalty for her son's killers. Dispatched on the errand by the Southern Poverty Law Center — which had just won a civil suit on behalf of the victim's mother — Clark considered the disproportionate number of African Americans on death row, and the unlikelihood of white victims' families being asked to forgive them.

Bracing herself for a difficult conversation, she was amazed to find that the woman already shared her own abhorrence of the death penalty.

"Her reason was powerful and simple," Clark recalls. "She said she never wanted another mother to experience the agony she had experienced in losing a child."

Clark — now the National Criminal Justice Representative for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) — is committed to fostering the kind of human connections that can build resistance to vengeance-oriented Right-wing criminal justice agendas.

"You can't kill folks who have mothers and brothers who love them — you can only kill them if you consider them to be monsters," Clark says. "We encourage people to write or visit folks on death row. When people are able to put human faces on inmates, it is much more diffi-

I grew up in a very close faith community and took to heart the social gospel. If we viewed our communities as our families, that would serve to address a lot of issues.



Pat Clark

Resisting the politics of fear

by Marianne Arbogast

cult for them to advocate killing."

Clark, who recently developed a set of radio public service announcements entitled "Stop the Politics of Fear," says that the Service Committee is "mounting a public media campaign to try to address the rhetoric that focuses on more harsh, punitive measures for people who are incarcerated."

The ads — featuring the level, commonsense voice of actress Peg Phillips (Ruth Anne of *Northern Exposure*) — attempt to counter uninformed support of measures such as "three-strikes-and-you're-out" laws, mandatory sentencing and the death penalty.

Clark's passionate opposition to the death penalty began in her childhood, when an uncle and first cousin were murdered in separate incidents six months apart. Her grandmother — while mourning her youngest son and oldest grandchild -- taught her that "it was not for us

to seek vengeance, that only God could make judgement on the situation. We're all children of God. Who has the right to say who lives or dies?"

"I became aware of the need to create a better understanding of what community is," Clark says. "I grew up in a very close faith community, and I really took to heart the social gospel. If we viewed our communities as our families, that would serve to address a lot of issues."

Clark's expansive understanding of family drew her to Zaire to work with Habitat for Humanity, to the Alabama Klanwatch Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, to anti-death-penalty organizing in California, then back to the Northeast and her current AFSC position.

For Clark, to fight the death penalty is to confront the taproot of community-denying policies.

"When a society can kill its citizens,

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*.

*Witness,
the quick and the dead*

then it is free to do anything it wants to the people who comprise it," she explains. "If we can make everyone feel that killing is immoral, whether by the state or the individual — if we can begin to agree that life is valuable and we all have a contribution to make — that would affect how we go about providing educational opportunities and how we think about welfare."

Clark has a deeply personal motivation for her work. She is raising two nephews and a niece, ages 8, 9 and 12, in a household that also includes her mother, a sister and the sister's two children.

"When I see statistics on how many young black males have come under the criminal justice web, and how difficult it is for young black men to stay alive in this culture, I know I have to try to create a society that will allow them to function as the total human beings they are," she explains.

For Clark, taking in her sister's children seemed the natural outcome of her life commitments.

"I can't work on social justice issues and not be responsive to a family crisis," she says. "You can't do social justice work in a vacuum. My kids and my mom have provided me with a lot of insights. I've experienced what it means to adjust my desires and needs to what's best for all involved. And they're a lot of fun, too — they're incredibly witty and bright."

When Clark is home, she spends much of her time at school meetings, basketball games or church activities. Her mother cares for the children during her frequent speaking tours on the death penalty and other criminal justice issues.

Despite the growing outcry for capital punishment, Clark believes that "support for the death penalty is a mile wide and an inch deep" — a gut reaction based on false assumptions, such as the belief that families of victims want eye-for-an-eye justice.

"People just assume that the families

of victims are drawn to the harshest punishment possible, but many come to the conclusion that they don't want to lose their sense of humanity, or project that kind of rage and bitterness."

Though it is necessary to confront false assumptions and Right-wing rhetoric, it is even more vital to move liberal Christians from talk to action, Clark believes.

"As horrified as I am to hear religious

As horrified as I am to hear religious groups on the Right state that the death penalty is all right, I am even more horrified by denominations which say it is immoral but are afraid of lifting their voices and challenging it in a much more unified way.

groups on the Right state that the death penalty is all right, I am even more horrified by denominations which say it is immoral but are afraid of lifting their voices and challenging it in a much more unified way," she says. "Many mainline denominations have made very powerful statements of condemnation, but are not actively engaged in communicating the message to their constituency."

She is currently enlisting church leaders around the country to organize death penalty study groups, based on a study guide funded by the Presbyterian Church. Using questionnaires which participants will fill out before and after the series, Clark and others will then analyze what it takes to change people's minds. A national conference of religious anti-death penalty organizers is planned for November, 1997.

"We are hoping to create unified, active opposition from the faith-based community," Clark explains.

"We also want to help religious groups form networks of support for family members of victims. I know a deeply spiritual Roman Catholic woman in California whose husband was murdered. She was opposed to the death penalty, but when she went to talk to the prosecutor, she was told she didn't have any choice in the matter. She was already traumatized, and faced the further traumatization of adding several more deaths to the tragedy. In that situation, where was the church?"

Clark is working to ensure that her niece and nephews will grow up in a strong community of family and faith. "One of the reasons I moved back to New Jersey was that I wanted my kids to be close to extended family," she says.

She would like them to learn that family extends far beyond the narrow boundaries that too often confine it today.

"I get infuriated when I hear folks espouse family values, who then turn around and want to cut welfare or don't want to provide educational opportunities or put out services to immigrant families. It makes me question how they define family. And whose family? That's not my notion of the support and love and compassion that family entails." **TW**

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